

1 HB 1491 - Testimony In Favor

2 North Dakota School Nutrition Association – Michelle Wagner,
3 RD, SNS, NDSNA Legislative Chair

4 Good afternoon, Chairman Elkin and Committee Members,

5 My name is Michelle Wagner, I would like to disclose that I am
6 the Child Nutrition Program Director for Bismarck Public
7 Schools but today I am here representing the North Dakota School
8 Nutrition Association. NDSNA is a non-profit organization with
9 currently 343 members comprised of school cooks, managers, and
10 directors from districts across our state whose job is to feed our
11 students. You could say that our association represents the front-
12 line workers of the school cafeteria.

13 I'd like to share with you today why NDSNA is asking for a "Do
14 Pass" recommendation for HB 1491. This bill helps support the
15 working-class citizens of North Dakota. With the poverty level
16 set at 185% for reduced-price meals, there are many working
17 families that are just over this threshold that do not qualify for
18 meal assistance. It was reported that one family's annual salary
19 was over the Federal Poverty Line by four dollars and therefore

1 reduced meal benefits were denied. Another family was also
2 denied meal benefits because they were twenty dollars a month
3 over the Federal Poverty Line. Many of these parents are working
4 more than one job but because of this they are penalized and will
5 not qualify for a benefit they desperately need. This bill is not a
6 free handout, it's support for those that are contributing to our
7 communities but still struggling to provide for their children.

8 While the proposed House Bill of increasing the poverty line to
9 200% helps bridge the gap between hard-working families and
10 the current inflation many parents are experiencing, amending the
11 proposed bill to 400% would ensure that more families would
12 benefit from this program. For less than the price of a cup of
13 coffee, you are giving these students a chance to succeed. Our
14 cooks that feed students every day know that the meals they are
15 providing make a difference in the student's life. A student
16 cannot learn if their brain is not properly fueled.

17 NDSNA encourages you to give this bill a "Do Pass"
18 recommendation and vote for it on the Senate Floor. Thank you
19 for your time today.