

Senator Elkin and Members of the Senate Education Committee,
My name is Lori Wentz and I am a homeschool parent from Dickinson, ND. My current title is Special Needs Coordinator for NDHSA (North Dakota Homeschool Association). In the past 20 years I have been involved in and worked with Policy Council for Head Start, served multiple years as a Parent Representative for the R.I.C.C. (Regional Interagency Coordinating Committee) and provided advocacy work for both public and homeschool parents. My current position puts me in frequent contact with public school districts throughout the state.

I would like to address the changes to the homeschool bill regarding submitting a Statement of Intent five days prior rather than fourteen. This portion of the bill (15.1-23-02) primarily affects public school families that are pulling their children out to Homeschool. The most common reasons that I am brought in to assist with a situation is bullying, allegations of mental or physical abuse and a parent feeling that private services at home will be more effective for their Special needs child. Often, the situation is already tense and there is a lack of communication happening between the parent and the school.

For the public school, the child being required to stay an additional fourteen days after the decision to leave has been made is often a disadvantage. The school is using the valuable time of paraprofessionals, therapists and other personnel for a child whose goals are most likely going to change the moment they switch to new support professionals to meet their needs. The behavior of the student can also change because once they know they are going to leave they may not be cooperative with the teachers at school.

For the homeschool parent, there are disadvantages as well. Special needs parents are in the process of setting up private therapies that are delayed while waiting for their student to exit the system. In bullying situations in particular, having the child stay an additional fourteen days can allow additional abuse incidents to occur.

On the occasions where we have asked the districts if they would be willing to waive the waiting period to bring the child home immediately, the response has been completely unpredictable. Their answers ranged from allowing the child to come home immediately, asking for a doctor's note first or denying the request completely. In the cases of complete denial, when asked to give me a written plan of what they will do differently in the next fourteen days ALL districts, thus far, have chosen to stop the conversation and allow the child to come home immediately.

I have also had a Superintendent tell me that the waiting period is for the public-school parent to set up therapies and submit their Home Services plan to the district. As stated above, multiple therapists have stated to me that they often have to wait until the child is available during the day in order to do an intake and evaluation for what services are needed. Consequently, the parent ends up waiting anyway. As for filling out a Home Services plan, NDHSA has created several new forms in order to facilitate an easier way for parents to submit the needed information thus saving time.

With all the information I have shared, I think it is clear that reducing the waiting period will make a smoother transition period for both the public school and the homeschool family.

The second part of the bill I would like to address is the language changes in 15.1-23-15. Previously, the wording was 'the child is not benefitting from home education'. The new change states 'making

adequate progress or maintaining progress made based on academic ability'. This reflects the idea that not all students are neurotypical and will automatically be in the appropriate grade for their age. If they are Special Needs with learning disabilities, just maintaining past academic learning and supporting them in hopes of future gains may often be a more realistic goal. This language is similar to what is used in IEP's (Individual Education Plan) in the public school. The clear designation of a child's current level of function is also represented in the newly created forms by NDHSA. Please support this change in the bill as it reflects more respect for Special Needs and is the current language used in education.

Thank You,

Lori Wentz

District 37

Dickinson, ND

(701)-590-3770

Student Services Plan for Homeschool

The child Joe Average. will be taught the following subjects appropriate for a 3rd grader.

Elementary and middle school:

- English language arts, including reading, composition, creative writing, English grammar, and spelling;
- mathematics;
- social studies, including United States' Constitution, United States history, geography, and government, and in 4th and 8th grades, North Dakota studies, with an emphasis on the geography, history, and agriculture of North Dakota;
- science, including agriculture;
- physical education; and
- health, including physiology, hygiene, disease control, and the nature and effects of alcohol, tobacco, and narcotics.

High school:

- English language arts (includes literature, composition, and speech)
- mathematics;
- science (includes biology and chemistry or physical science);
- social studies (includes U.S. history, civics, economics, and concepts of personal finance)
- physical education; and
- foreign languages or fine arts or career and technical education.

Professionally provided services:

Speech Therapy will be provided by Rehab Visions
Occupational Therapy will be provided by Wonder Kids

Home interventions provided by or supervised by the parent:

- longer test times
- more read-alouds than one-on-one reading
- less writing; more narration work

Mama Average
Parent signature

Student Services Plan Homeschool Progress Report

This form is to meet the requirements of North Dakota Century Code 15.1-23-15.

The following services are being provided pursuant to a student services plan developed and followed in accordance with North Dakota Century Code § 15.1-23-14... Progress reports from providers are attached.

Speech Therapy will be provided by Rehab Visions

Occupational Therapy will be provided by Wonder Kids

_____ will be provided by _____

* Attach a 1 page summary of current goals & progress from each provider.

- Child is making adequate progress.
- Child is maintaining based on academic ability.

(For children with Learning disabilities for example... They may have a goal of maintaining current skills but may not be able to move to another grade level.)

Mama Average

Parent signature

Services Provider Progress Report



Paraprofessional-to-Teacher Pathway Grants

Overview: Over the past two years, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) has funded three paraprofessional-to-teacher grants with ESSER funds. This initiative has two key priorities.

- First, it targets individuals who are currently working in our North Dakota schools because they are then more likely to remain in that school after obtaining their teaching degree.
- Second, it targets individuals working as a paraprofessional or those with an associates degree because then we can fast-track their path to becoming a teacher.

The Why:

- Teacher Shortage is a pervasive problem
- Affecting all states nationwide
- North Dakota's Story
 - Approximately 9,000 teachers in North Dakota
 - Critical Shortage Areas
 - Special Education K-12
 - CTE 9-12
 - Counselor
 - Science 9-12
 - Emergency Licensure/Teacher Openings
 - 2021-2022: 497
 - 2022-2023: 613

Funded Programs:

- Round One – Minot State University (Fall 2020)
 - Focus on special education
 - Tuition fully funded
 - Currently enrolled – 108
- Round Two – University of Mary (Spring 2022)
 - Focus on general education and rural districts
 - Tuition partially funded (one-third)
 - Currently enrolled – 44
- Round Three – Valley City State University (Fall 2022)
 - Focus on dual licensure
 - Tuition fully funded
 - Spring 2023 – 25 students
 - Fall 2023 – 50 students

Request: Senate Bill No. 2032 is a bill for an act to provide an appropriation in the sum of \$3,000,000 to the Department of Public Instruction for the paraprofessional-to-teacher program. The purpose of this bill is to continue funding this work, as all current programs have been very successful and have a waiting list.

Questions:

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