

**Testimony of Dr. Cory Steiner  
Northern Cass Superintendent  
SB 2250: Support of Funding for Expansion of Teacher Support Program  
Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate Education committee: It is my privilege to submit testimony in support of SB 2250 for the expansion of the teacher support program to include support for teachers in their second, third, and fourth years of teaching.

My name is Dr. Cory J. Steiner and I'm the Superintendent of Schools at Northern Cass School District in Hunter, North Dakota. Northern Cass is a PK-12 district with 690 learners located 25 miles northwest of Fargo. We are an innovative school district which is in the midst of a transformation to personalized, competency-based learning.

The issues in education are profound, but more importantly, they are urgent. Approximately 50% of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years of teaching. Not only are teachers leaving at a higher rate, but fewer are also choosing teaching as a career. In March of 2019, we had 2 elementary openings and 55 applicants. During the spring of 2022, we had 2 elementary openings and had 8 applicants. During the past spring, we also had a secondary opening for English Language Arts and only had one formal application. In previous years, we always had at least 10 applicants for an ELA opening. In the spring of 2022, we surveyed our staff. Fifty-seven percent said they considered taking a job elsewhere or leaving the profession completely. It is my opinion that many districts would seem similar results. We are in dire need of a different approach in North Dakota, or our school systems will no longer be able to fill open positions or retain qualified personnel. This will not only damage the system, but more importantly, will not allow our learners to have the highest quality educational experience.

The structure and function of our schools today must change to meet the needs of a world which is changing at an exponential rate. Every system is designed to get the results it gets. Our system is getting the results it is supposed to get. Unfortunately, what is being asked of schools has changed dramatically since the design of the system. In schools, we have been tasked to prepare learners to be productive members of society. We have been asked to prepare learners for college, career, and military. We are asked to prepare learners of today for jobs that don't exist while also making sure learners have the skills for jobs in the workplace now. We must develop academic, social, and emotional skills while

developing long-lasting relationships in a safe environment. In other words, we must prepare learners to be choice ready for the future. The list of important things to do and accomplish is never-ending. Veteran and new teachers will continue to be asked to do more than ever before. Our system of support for these educators is no longer sufficient and must change with the new demands on our teachers.

The mentoring program can play a significant role in shaping the values, beliefs, and teaching skills of a new teacher. It can have a huge influence on their behavior and the choices they can make later in their career. Evidence-based mentoring promotes teacher retention and consistency among educators. Mentoring programs not only increase job satisfaction and help teachers to emerge as leaders within their schools, but also have a positive effect on student achievement and engagement. Mentoring has proven to keep educators in the field which is of utmost importance. Passage of this bill is the first step in showing educators they matter, and that the state of North Dakota values them as both professionals and individuals.

I understand the financial commitment for this aspect of the bill is significant. However, I believe the negative impact by not doing this is far greater. By supporting funding for increased mentoring, the legislature will make a statement it stands in support of doing what must be done for the state's future success. You have the power to create a different version of tomorrow by supporting this funding. You have an opportunity to change our future and allow us to do it together through a collaborative effort. I ask for a 'do pass' on SB 2250 and thank you for your time and consideration.

Dr. Cory J. Steiner  
Superintendent, Northern Cass School District