

Chairman Elkin and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Stacy Duffield. I am past president of the North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NDACTE). I have been facilitating a teacher shortage workgroup representing multiple educators, agencies, and organizations in ND.

This testimony is **in support of SB2500 with a few key amendments** described below.

June 8th, 2022, NDACTE hosted a Teacher Shortage Summit in Bismarck for approximately 80 individuals representing higher education teacher preparation programs, K12 educators and administrators, ND School Board Association, ESPB, DPI, and legislators. This day resulted in multiple ideas for addressing our critical teacher shortage, and several working groups were formed to further explore and develop these ideas; 50 individuals participated in these workgroups with additional consults and sharing from countless others.

A culminating result of this work is a bill to expand the statewide mentoring program currently offered by ESPB. Additional professional support, mentoring in particular, came through as one of the top ideas from the summit, and research shows that when teachers feel isolated and lack support, they are more likely to leave the profession.

The working group recognizes the current mentoring program has had a highly positive impact for first-year teachers, not only **influencing retention but also supporting better quality instruction** for ND students. Our workgroup sees great potential in expanding the mentoring support to 2-4th year teachers, providing a continuum of support that takes educators into their 5th year. Research shows that when teachers are supported and nurtured into their fifth year, they are more likely to stay for the career.

This bill is meant to **help districts fill gaps in their current systems of support**. Most mentoring focuses on the first year or two, and although some districts have programs to support teachers beyond the first year, some do not. This bill is intended to fill that gap, providing ESPB with additional resources for mentors and staff to serve more teachers and increase teacher retention.

We request some wording changes to better align with the current ESPB mentoring program, enabling a consistent and comprehensive continuum of support for teachers. Please see the marked-up bill attached below.

In closing, the Expanded Mentoring Teacher Shortage Workgroup and those we represent thank the bill sponsors: Senators Davison, Axtman, and Rust and Representatives Pyle and Schrieber-Beck as well as this committee. This bill further enables retention of high-quality teachers for ND students.

Sincerely,

Stacy Duffield
Stacy.Duffield@ndsu.edu