



North Dakota Small Organized Schools

Mr. Michael Heilman
Executive Director
3144 Hampton Street
Bismarck, ND 58504
mheilmandsos@gmail.com
701-527-4621

Mr. Brandt Dick
President
1929 N. Washington Steet. Ste.A
Bismarck, ND 58501
Brandt.Dick@k12.nd.us
701-415-0441

Mr. Steven Heim
Vice-President
PO Box 256
Drake, ND 58736
Steve.heim@k12.nd.us
701-465-3732

SB 2254 – Testimony in Opposition
Senate Education Committee
Senator Elkin – Chairman
January 24, 2023

Senator Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Michael Heilman. I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools (NDSOS). I represent 150-member school districts of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools. NDSOS stands in opposition to SB 2254

NDSOS is not in support SB 2254 as written because it completely takes the control of a school district from local school board and administration. You may feel that after being identified as chronically failing that take over and control is what needs to happen for the children that attend a school as identified in this bill. We would not totally disagree but would say that the Department should provide supports and work with the local administration to raise the performance level of the students.

NDSOS would prefer a process that is based on cooperation with the local school administration and school board to design an improvement plan with support from DPI. The work of DPI identifying low performing schools is happening but that is different than take over, DPI should assist. If the Department of Public Instruction has the programing available to impact positive change, as this bill would suggest, why has it not been implemented through the current accreditation process? This is not a criticism of the Department, rather a belief that these are complex issues that need understanding, support, cooperation, and collaboration, especially if there is to be significant and sustained change. NDSOS does not support take over, nor that take over is the best way to start the process of improvement.

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The mission of NDSOS is to provide leadership for the small/rural schools in North Dakota and to support legislation favorable to their philosophy while opposing legislation that is harmful.