

Testimony before the ND Senate Education Committee
RE: SB 2269

Chairman Elkin, Vice Chairman Beard, and members of the committee:

I'm Sonia Meehl from Oakes. I'm in my ninth year on and currently the chairman of both the State Boards of Public School Education and Career and Technical Education.

The seven-member PSE Board is the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, plus six individuals appointed by the governor, one from each of six regions, two of whom must be members of ND School boards association. The bulk of our work is acting on school district annexations, reorganizations, and dissolutions. The CTE Board is made up of those seven members plus the Chancellor of Higher Education and the Director of ND Job Service.

I was on these boards when the Center for Distance Education was assigned to the CTE Board in 2019. I admit that it seemed to me to be a bit out of place under the CTE board, but nonetheless, I think the Center has flourished while under our supervision. At that time, the previous long-time director had stepped down, so our first task was to hire a new director. WE did so, and in less than a year, demands on the Center exploded with unprecedented distance-education needs due to the pandemic. The Center successfully navigated that challenge. Since 2021, enrollment has declined somewhat, but is still higher than pre-pandemic. Dr. Martin was recently hired as our second new director and is proving to be a capable and visionary leader for the Center.

If the Center remains under the CTE board, we'll continue to do our best to position the Center to fulfill its educational mission. If the Center is placed elsewhere, we will strive to ensure a smooth transition to its new home. We will collaborate with the Center where needed, and continue with our mission *to work with others to provide North Dakotans with the technical skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for successful performance in a globally competitive workplace.*