

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 SB2700**.

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. One of the recommendations from these workgroups to address the critical teacher shortage is a bill to incentivize student teaching in rural schools.

Across the teacher preparation programs in North Dakota, approximately one quarter (24%) of our current student teachers are in rural, North Dakota schools, and we would like to see this number grow to meet state needs. We believe this percentage will be significantly higher if student teachers are provided with a financial incentive.

Uprooting and moving to a rural community can be difficult and cost prohibitive for a student teacher, as they have to leave behind shared living expenses, a job, and their social network.

In addition to the financial support this bill will provide, completing student teaching in a rural school presents the opportunity to remove uncertainties about living in a rural community and teaching in a rural school and helps these future teachers build an attachment to the community, school, and students.

We strongly support the focus this bill places on incentivizing well-prepared educators in rural, North Dakota schools and in high-need disciplines. We also appreciate that the funds are not restricted by financial aid constraints that would prevent many student teachers from being eligible.

In closing, the Financial Support Teacher Shortage Workgroup and those we represent thank the bill sponsors: Senators Bekkedahl and Davison, and Representatives Heinert, Nathe, Sanford, and Schaible as well as this committee. This bill further enables recruitment of high-quality teachers for North Dakota students.

Sincerely,

Stacy Duffield
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