

Chairman Elkin and Members of the Committee:

I am Dr. Meghan Salyers, Director of Student Teaching & Accreditation at the University of Mary and current President of the North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NDACTE). I have been the Director of Student Teaching at both public and private North Dakota universities over the past nine years and am keenly aware of rural school districts' desperation for teachers and the great need for more teachers across our state.

This testimony is **in support of SB2270**.

Having been the Director of Student Teaching in a large public university on the eastern border of North Dakota and in a private university in the central-west of North Dakota, I have had innumerable opportunities to learn about regional needs across our excellent state through powerful discussions with principals and superintendents. I currently chair a rural problem-solving partnership "Think Tank" comprised of approximately 10 rural district superintendents in North Dakota, and host events that purposely connect current student teachers with partner school districts. These special relationships provide organic opportunities for teacher shortage discussions.

The consensus is clear: there is desperate need of teachers across our state, and often, the cost of student teaching in rural districts is prohibitive to rural recruitment efforts (e.g., having to pay for rural housing in addition to college dorms/apartments, having to leave their jobs, and paying for groceries versus their meal plans on campus). In addition, basic amenities are much farther away and the gas expense exceeds affordability.

Next, I have been an active participant in the teacher shortage workgroups borne of Dr. Stacy Duffield's leadership on NDACTE; these collaborative workgroups consist of educator preparation programs' (EPP) faculty, superintendents, educational agencies, and organizations. **We strongly support SB2270's** intent to incentivize student teaching in rural communities.

While our 13 EPPs have placed 24% of our student teachers in rural districts this year, some Grow-Your-Own para-to-teacher pipeline programs have intentionally been designed to address rural districts' extreme need for teachers by attracting and supporting their communities' talents; yet these provide partial (but essential) resolution to a very complex issue that needs to be addressed from a multifaceted approach. *It is essential that the number of teachers grows in all North Dakota schools, especially our rural districts. This is why I fully support SB2270*, which will provide incentives to upcoming student teachers to (1) remain in the field for the time commitment noted in the bill – and research shows that the teacher attrition rate declines if they complete their first two years with mentorship; and (2) will provide rural school districts with recruitment incentives to keep local talent local and attract new teachers to their schools. Importantly, providing the financial incentive in this bill will result in fewer hesitant student teachers – they will be more eager for the unique and challenging opportunities that await them in rural districts. As a Director of Student Teaching with direct contact with upcoming student teachers, I will be much better able to promote these experiences successfully.

Thank you to the bill sponsors, Senators Bekkedahl, Davison and Representatives Heinert, Nathe, Sanford, and Schaible, and this committee.

Sincerely,



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