

**HB 1013/1510**  
**House Appropriations - Education & Environment Committee**  
**Rep. Mike Nathe, chair**  
**January 27, 2025**  
**Prairie Room, State Capitol**

Good morning, Chairman Nathe and members of the House Appropriations - Education and Environment Committee. For the record, my name is Maria Neset and I serve as Chief of Staff to Lt. Gov. Michell Strinden and Senior Advisor to Gov. Kelly Armstrong. I am here to provide testimony that supports the Teacher Retention & Recruitment Task Force report and the funding requested to support our educators.

Before I go straight into the funding requests, I would like to provide some background on the launch of the task force and the final report. And we would like to extend our gratitude to Rep. Swiontek in addition to the other members for their willingness to serve on the task force and share their expertise. Thank you.

In the summer of 2023, Gov. Burgum received an emergency rules request from the Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) related to teacher shortages. The solution provided from some administrators was to give school districts additional flexibility that temporarily allowed expanded use of student teachers. It was shared that the teacher shortage had been a common concern for administrators in the summer as they were hiring for the start of the school year.

While not an ideal situation, Gov. Burgum granted the request for emergency rule making with the caveat that a task force related to teacher retention and recruitment to study the larger issue would be initiated. [Executive Order 2023-08](#) established the task force, and members were appointed from across various stakeholder groups. The task force met multiple times throughout the next several months to determine focus areas and finalized a report with recommendations to be delivered to the

Governor and State Superintendent for consideration by the 69<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

I will quickly walk through the recommendations and specifically discuss the programs funded in the Armstrong executive budget proposal. The recommendations are a combination of policy, studies and budgetary requests. Please see the handout titled "[North Dakota Teacher Retention & Recruitment Task Force Report](#)." This has also been uploaded as online testimony. I do want to make the committee aware House Bill 1510 is supporting aspects of this report as well. The bill has not yet been scheduled for an initial hearing.

The task force supported seven recommendations:

- Provide a safe and supportive environment for educators and learners in every building.
- Reduce barriers for schools that wish to provide child care.
- Understand supportive school culture.
- Fund mentorship for educators and administrators.
- Fund educator pathways.
- Maximize benefits for educators.
- Optimize educator earnings.

The task force was committed to ensuring the work environment was a key focus. We recognize work is already underway to drive improvements through a statewide effort. The Armstrong budget recommends \$2 million be appropriated to DPI to continue the statewide teacher retention program. This program is making remarkable efforts in districts across the state, and we need to sustain these efforts. Vital Network provided data and impact through their testimony last Friday. Our learners thrive when teachers and leaders are in a supportive work environment.

The task force recognized the long-standing impact from the teacher mentorship program, formerly known as the Teacher Support System, now known as ND Rise. Administered through ESPB, this program shows

measurable outcomes that are driving educator retention efforts. Thanks to Erin Jacobson for sharing the impact data last week during her testimony.

We have seen firsthand the importance of mentorship beyond just the first year. Knowing this, the Armstrong budget proposes a \$2 million appropriation to DPI (above their base allocation of \$2.5 million) as a pass-through grants line to support ND Rise. The program shall include supports and resources for all first- to third-year teachers who meet the requirements outlined in NDCC or program guidance, as determined by ESPB.

I would like to highlight another line item proposed in the DPI budget and how these three efforts combined support a multi-layered approach that is critical when the state is contributing nearly \$2.5 billion dollars to our public schools. I often refer to this as the three legs of the stool. These three programs are critical to supporting the foundations of student well-being and academic growth.

- **Be Legendary School Board Training:** The focus on student outcomes is critical to supporting school board members in understanding how programming, policy and budget need to align with student-centered instruction.
- **ND Rise:** While a “new” teacher has a license to teach, there is a lot that a beginning educator needs during their first few years in the classroom. Mentorship provides a safe and supportive peer or master teacher who can encourage, coach and guide a new professional, supporting the learning curve and reducing burnout.
- **Statewide Teacher Retention:** There needs to be a continued focus on school culture and providing processes for teachers to feel supported and recognized for their efforts.

We need all three legs of this stool to create a solid foundation for our students to improve in all measures of well-being and academic attainment. Thank you for your time and I’d welcome any questions.

	<b>21-23</b>	<b>23-25</b>	<b>25-27</b>
<b>ND Rise (mentorship)</b>	State funds: \$2.1 million	State funds: \$2.5 million	State Funds (Base): \$2.5 million
	GEER funds: \$1.3 million	GEER funds: \$1.3 million	Armstrong proposed increase: \$2 million
	<b>TOTAL: \$3.4 million</b>	<b>TOTAL: \$3.8 million</b>	<b>TOTAL: \$4.5 million</b>
	<b>21-23</b>	<b>23-25</b>	<b>25-27</b>
<b>Vital Network</b>	Not Applicable	<b>TOTAL: \$2.3 million</b> <i>(allocated out of \$4.3 million)</i>	<b>Armstrong proposed amount: \$2 million</b>