

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1098
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

January 14, 2025

By: Jim Upgren, Assistant Director of School Approval and Opportunity

701-328-2244

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jim Upgren, Legislative Liaison and Assistant Director in the Office of School Approval and Opportunity with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here on behalf of the department to speak in support of HB 1098.

The North Dakota Scholarship is a \$6000 college scholarship awarded to students based on requirements met while in high school. Any student that meets all the requirements of the scholarship gets a scholarship, regardless of how many students qualify. The current North Dakota Scholarship replaces the former Academic Scholarship and CTE Scholarship, and the Class of 2025 is the first class that must use the new set of scholarship requirements. The North Dakota Scholarship requirements are aligned with North Dakota's Choice Ready high school accountability and quality metrics, but they are written with rigorous expectations above and beyond what is required for the basic Choice Ready baseline graduation requirements. Every student that qualifies for the scholarship will graduate Choice Ready, but not necessarily every student that graduates Choice Ready will qualify for the scholarship.

We created the North Dakota Scholarship chart because this is the best way to illustrate the scholarship requirements for schools, students, and parents, and I have included a copy of the chart with my testimony for your reference. To have a chance to qualify for the scholarship, students must first meet four of the eight Essential Skills at the top of the chart in the yellow section. At the bottom of the chart are three pathways in blue: Post-Secondary Ready (on the left), Workforce Ready (in the middle), and Military Ready (on the right). Students who have a 3.0 grade-point-average and have met the Essentials Skills section at the top of the chart, and then meet the requirements of at least two of the three pathways at the bottom of the chart qualify for the North Dakota Scholarship.

HB 1098 specifically addresses the Workforce Ready pathway, which is found on page 3, lines 1 through 13 of the bill. Currently, students must have either four credits of Career and Technical Education (CTE) with at least two of those credits from the same CTE Coordinated Plan of Study, or have three credits of the same world language, indigenous language, or sign language to meet the coursework component of the Workforce Ready pathway. This bill would provide students with a third option of completing courses relating to the profession of teaching. The former Academic and CTE Scholarships had a coursework option that consisted of courses relating to the profession of teaching, and HB 1098 would add that option to the North Dakota Scholarship under the Workforce Ready pathway.

In consultation with the bill's sponsor, we would like to propose an amendment to the bill, and I have included a copy of our proposed amendment with my testimony. Under the former CTE scholarship, the option related to the profession of teaching consisted of two credits of CTE, one credit of teaching profession or educational methodology, and one credit from any combination of Advanced Placement Psychology, dual credit Psychology, Child Development, Peer-to-Peer Leadership, or Child-Related Careers, for a total of four credits. As currently written, the bill only calls for students to earn two credits under this option, which is not the same level of rigor as four CTE courses or three language courses would be. Therefore, we propose amending the bill to make it the same option that existed under the former CTE Scholarship. On page 3, line 8, we propose striking through the phrase "which consist of:", and also making paragraphs 1 and 2 all read as part of subdivision c. Doing this would create the same four-credit option that was part of the former CTE Scholarship and make this option the same level of rigor as subdivisions a and b.

NDDPI fully supports HB 1098 to allow students preparing for a career in teaching to use that coursework towards qualifying for the North Dakota Scholarship, and our proposed amendments will ensure that this additional option is at the same level of rigor as the options currently available. I request that the committee adopt our proposed amendment, and then give HB 1098 bill a "Do Pass" recommendation to support students pursuing a career in education.

Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony and I will stand for any questions that you may have.