

**Emily G. Schaefer**

**Assistant Principal and Professional Development Coordinator**

**North Dakota Center for Distance Education.**

**HB 1105- In opposition**

Chair Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

I am here to provide testimony in opposition to HB 1105. I would like to introduce myself. I am Emily Schaefer, from Langdon, ND, originally from Walhalla, ND. I am currently the Assistant Principal and Professional Development Coordinator at NDCDE. Prior to that I was a full-time elementary teacher with NDCDE, a part-time elementary teacher with NDCDE, and before that a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Cavalier, ND. My roots in North Dakota are strong and my passion for the students in this state runs deep.

I am lucky enough to be employed by NDCDE. It was a happenstance situation where in 2020, I saw a part-time job opening for an elementary teacher. Since then, my career with NDCDE has evolved and most recently into a leadership role. I have seen NDCDE through major growth with the pandemic and then the legislative session of 2023. I have taught countless students who have come to online learning for different reasons. My passion and focus until recently was our elementary program, and I had families tell me they couldn't "thank me enough" for this option. Families and children going through illness (child or parent), moves, hardships, mental health struggles who were able to have access to a quality education through NDCDE without "red tape" tied to it. As of yesterday evening, we had over 13,000 enrollments for the year. Each one of those with different stories. Last year, I had a student who had severe health issues, she needed a complicated surgery and was unable to attend school or leave her house due to exposure to illness. I was able to provide her with a quality education, regardless. Her parents financially could never have afforded NDCDE. They both worked multiple jobs and had medical bills to pay. The young girl ended up doing ok in her courses, but she was close to failing math at points. If her parents had had the burden of covering the costs, I don't know what they would have done.

Sometimes we are students last option, when every teacher or building has given up or deemed them too difficult (academically, behaviorally or emotionally), they are brought to us. Parents are given hope for another way for their child to be educated. If HB 1105 passed, that option leaves our students and now puts the burden on families, when often times, districts push these students to us.

My personal background is that of a rural ND girl. In Walhalla or a small town like it, I did not have the chance to take Interior Design, Education Methodologies, Agriculture courses, Gothic Literature, and many other courses offered at NDCDE. My parents most certainly would not have afforded to pay for it either. For generations, my family was never granted these opportunities, and I wish that we had been. My sons now will have the opportunity to take

courses that our local district cannot offer, and even if they could, they could not afford or find a teacher for it in our rural area.

I ask you to consider opposing this bill, as it will take educational opportunities away from our North Dakota students. North Dakota strives to better the place we live, and providing access to all forms of education to our children should be a priority.

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