



1 NDCEL Testimony in Support HB 1172 – NDCDE Fees

2 Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee - Thank you for the opportunity to provide
3 testimony in support of House Bill 1172 which clarifies language from last session and reflects
4 the legislative intent of the conference committee regarding NDCDE fees and who is responsible
5 for the payment of courses based on circumstances by which the student finds him or herself
6 taking the course. This is important for a number of reasons – for the well-being of the student,
7 for appropriate fiscal stewardship of tax dollars, for the financial control of their local budget, ad
8 for assurance of the student being in their best placement for learning, among others.

9 Currently, districts are required to fund virtual courses even when equivalent in-person
10 instruction is offered locally. The local district has no authority to have influence when a student
11 wishes to drop a course at whatever time for whatever reason and to wish to switch to a virtual
12 course most often being the NDCDE. Having been involved in the adjustment to this language
13 last session, we do not believe the end interpretation of the bill was the intention of the
14 conference committee. This double payment system has strained district budgets, diverting
15 resources from other educational priorities. HB 1105 addresses this issue by allowing districts to
16 establish reasonable policies for virtual instruction that ensure efficient use of taxpayer dollars
17 while supporting student learning. To be clear – last session NDCEL supported the intent of the
18 legislature which was that if a district did not offer a course the student wanted to take that the
19 district would cover the cost of that course. Further, at times a district formally would elect to
20 cover a course to provide schedule flexibility for a student to ensure they could take the
21 coursework locally they otherwise would not be able to. However, this past biennium the
22 interpretation of this bill has not resulted in positive outcomes – we’ve had an inordinate amount
23 of money spent in the double payment of courses – in the millions.

24 This bill provide a reasonable solution wherein if a district doesn’t offer a course they wish to
25 take or the schedule provides challenges then the school would assist in the payment in the class.
26 However, if that is not the case, the parent would be responsible for that cost.

27 These provisions empower school boards to make informed, context-specific decisions that
28 balance student choice with fiscal responsibility. By prioritizing local instruction when available,
29 the bill also reinforces the vital role of North Dakota educators in student success.

30 I respectfully urge your support for HB 1172 to promote responsible educational policy and
31 ensure that district resources are used effectively to meet student needs.

32 Thank you for your consideration.

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