

**Peter Fritz**

**Teacher for the North Dakota Center for Distance Education.**

**HB 1172- In opposition**

Chair Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

I have taught many subjects for NDCDE in the last 5 years including: Spanish, World History, and English. For many students who are interested in the academic challenge and rewards of learning a foreign language, NDCDE is the only option. If this bill passes—this educational opportunity will only be given to students whose parents are not intimidated by the financial burden of tuition. This cannot become a reality. North Dakota values do not allow any reasoning to withhold education from any student due to economic disadvantages. May I remind the House Education Committee that a foreign language education is a requirement for North Dakota state scholarships and admission to many universities in this country. Certainly, we are not seriously considering 1) Taking foreign language opportunities away from schools who cannot afford to hire a teacher 2) Denying or intimidating economically disadvantaged students from taking a foreign language through NDCDE, and 3) Making it more difficult for North Dakota students to apply for college scholarships and college admittance. This is not my North Dakota. These are not my values. These are not the values of my community and great State.

Many of my students have chosen NDCDE and online education because they cannot emotionally and/or physically tolerate in-person public school. This is not new. Before COVID, and especially after the pandemic, families have been gradually moving away from in-person public education. Survey after survey demonstrates or proves this over and over again. Many of my students have anxiety, medical conditions, and are avoiding bullying and intimidation from peers and authoritarian adults. NDCDE and online learning is not an *option* for these students—it's a necessity of life. Certainly, we are not suggesting that this necessity of life should only be available to students who can afford it. This is not my North Dakota.

I am also certified in Special Education and I hold two earned graduate degrees in Education and History. NDCDE allows me to attend to the academic needs of my students 7 days a week and beyond the confines of traditional school hours. How many public schools can offer students with academic needs, included in IEPs and 504s 7-day a week attention when and if needed? I can, and I do. I can because NDCDE allows and endorses this flexibility, in an effort to maximize the potential of every student. Daily, I communicate with students and their guardians via online meetings, texts, and emails. I listened to the testimony in favor of this bill via video. In one testimonial, it was stated as fact that (*paraphrasing*) NDCDE teachers must find it difficult to manage so many students at so many stages in a course. The answer here is unequivocally “no.” This is our mission. This is our creed. We are designed to meet students where they are academically, and provide the necessary support for their academic success. Year around open enrollment for all students, all of whom receive the highest standard of education by qualified professional teachers, who are not constrained when the bell rings at the end of the day and/or the coming of the weekend. To deny modern students this educational advantage is to disinvest in the future. These are not my values.

NDCDE is a government school for the people. It is progress. It is cutting edge educational flexibility delivered with documented rigorous standards; the same, if not more rigorous standards as any other public school in North Dakota. We currently offer the world to EVERY student who is in need, who is

curious, who craves knowledge, and who wants to learn on their own terms without restrictions, without limitations, and without prejudice. This is a North Dakota school. North Dakota does not have a history of bounding its citizens, instead its history supports the freedom to choose and aspire to great heights. This is my North Dakota. These are my values. These are the values of my community and great State. I oppose this bill because it is regression and restricts individual liberty to choose---liberty to earn a high-quality education outside of the antiquated walls of a school system in need of reform. The provisions in this bill--These are not the values of my community and great State.

Thank you,