

January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025

Re: HB 1172; Support

Members of the Education Committee:

The forthcoming dialogue is a response in support of HB 1172. My name is Steve Madler and I am currently the Principal at Century High School within the Bismarck Public School district. Last week I provided testimony in support of HB 1105. Much of that testimony surrounded the volume of situations we are dealing with where the intent to pursue was not founded nor planned for in a student's 4-year plan. There was also testimony of mine and others which indicated the level of supervision by the learning coach had significant impacts on the integrity of the course and the outcomes of success. When this was lacking, failure rates were quite high (I believe NDCDE reported failure rates at 18% and our building was 21% for 23-24). Another restate from that testimony is that prior to August of 2023 and the implementation to HB 1376 the failure rate for our students taking NDCDE courses was essentially zero from the roughly 130 course completions. This discrepancy creates unnecessary fiscal impacts on districts for which some are visible and others are more hidden.

In 2023-2024, we had 459 enrollments in NDCDE courses. Of those 459, 19 enrollments (4%) were due to the class not being offered at Century High School. 30 enrollments (6.5%) were because the class did not fit into the students' schedule. 6 enrollments (1.3%) were due to the student not having interest in our available electives. In the end, 88% of the enrollments were requests for classes we offer and classes that fit into the students' daily schedule. Subsequently, the fiscal impact for duplicative offerings was \$104,636 for fiscal year 23-24. This is the visible impact. The hidden impact is that most of these enrollments came after in-person schedules were built, in-person classes had started, and contracts issued. Historically, when a student informed the school they were going to be taking an NDCDE class to satisfy a graduation requirement, they did not register for the in-person class. When guidance came in August of 2023 that said we cannot deny nor limit when a student starts a course, we ended up having hundreds of vacant seats in classes which were expecting enrollment. In review of the numbers, instead of needing 67.4 FTE's to staff requests, we would have been able to cover the numbers with 66 FTE's which is another \$100,000 impact. The next fiscal impact is the cost of addressing an 18-20% fail rate. In review, most of the classes failed were graduation requirements which means although it was paid for the first time, we will need to find some way to pay for it again in order to prevent dropout or negatively impact our graduation rate. Credit recovery is an expensive intervention. It is successful but far more expensive than traditional programming. We had less than 30 students accessing credit recovery last year and years prior. We currently have 80 students engaged in some sort of credit recovery. Because of the size and needs of this program, we are staffing it with a full-time teacher and an aide (another \$150,000 cost). This program is being funded by a grant in its last year. If funding cannot be found to continue this program, we will undoubtedly see negative impacts to our graduation rates and dropout rates which impacts our school accountability scores. Lastly, we hear things like 'Why don't you re-utilize the contracted teachers as learning coaches?'. I did that with 2 teachers this year for a period each which costs roughly \$25,000. Sounds reasonable but this too creates situations which cause one to scratch their head. As an example, physical education classes are the most popular online option. For this online class that requires fitness, I am going to schedule you into this classroom with a learning coach to do online physical fitness... That makes no logical sense. How about you schedule the kids into the gym with a PE teacher as their learning coach to do online physical fitness.... That is what PE class so why the online offering.

Having been a school administrator for over 20 years, I can guarantee this legislation will have a positive fiscal impact on districts and produce better results for students. It is missing the eligibility piece that HB 1105 articulated but listening to Dr. Martin's testimony last week we can collaborate with NDCDE with local policy to address those concerns. The one piece of language I would put caution to as written is the language 'student's preferred class schedule' in lines 13 and 14. There is a difference between a course conflict and a preferred release time. Preferred insinuates you offer this class 11:56 pm but I want to be done with my school day at 11:52. That is my preferred schedule so the district is responsible. This rationale could be constructed for every situation and essentially nullify the intent of the legislation.

Steve Madler  
Principal – Century High School