



Great Public Schools

Great Public Service

Testimony Before the House Education Committee
HB 1238
Tuesday, January 21, 2025

Chairman Heinert and members of the Committee, I am Nick Archuleta, ND United president, and I am here today in support of North Dakota's long-time teaching professionals, and to encourage a *do pass* recommendation for HB 1238.

Mr. Chairman, over the course of the last decade, the North Dakota legislature has worked with the North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board to implement alternative pathways to teacher licensure, different than the traditional pathway that generations of teachers navigated to become education professionals. This was done, of course, to mitigate the effects of the ongoing teacher shortage. The persistent shortage of teachers has meant many communities have had to scramble to meet the needs of their districts. Many districts have even turned to hiring foreign national teachers to fill their open positions. While these teachers are qualified and fulfill a need in many communities, we believe that recruiting, retaining, and respecting teachers here is the best way to meet our needs in the long-term.

Through it all, a resolute cadre of North Dakota teachers has persisted and dedicated themselves to teach and inspire learners in every corner of the state despite seeing new colleagues entering the profession with provisional or alternative licenses or permits. In short, Chairman Heinert and members of the Committee, ND has made every effort to accommodate the facilitation of newly licensed and permitted teachers while doing little for those teachers who have stayed true to the course through thick and thin.

Mr. Chairman, HB 1238 provides the opportunity to genuinely appreciate these teachers by lowering the number of years one must teach to be eligible for a lifetime license from 30 years to 20 years. You may hear opposition testimony expressing concern that if teachers earn lifetime licensure, they will quit taking courses and earning credits that, without

lifetime licensure, they would have otherwise taken and earned. Not only is that argument a slight to the professionalism of teachers, but it also discounts entirely the fact that teachers, regardless of the type of license they hold, have to take coursework to make lane changes and advance on the salary schedule. Additionally, teachers complete many hours of meaningful state and district mandated professional development. That said, the teachers I know engage in unmandated professional development simply because they want to continually improve their practice for the benefit of their students and profession.

Chairman Heinert and members of the Committee, please stand up for teachers, please show them that their dedication to the students of North Dakota is appreciated, and please give a *do pass* recommendation to HB 1238.