

Testimony on House Bill 1404
Presented by Kaitlyn Allen, Director of Curriculum, NDCDE
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Chairman Heinert, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Kaitlyn Allen, and I serve as the Director of Curriculum at the North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE). I am here to provide testimony regarding House Bill 1404, specifically addressing the changes outlined on page 4 of the bill.

Traditionally, the North Dakota scholarship has aligned with the Choice Ready framework, ensuring students are prepared for post-secondary education, the workforce, or the military. The recent update from the ESSA Committee has formally incorporated the Military Pathway into this framework, providing students with a structured and high-quality option for pursuing careers in military service. My role today is to outline what this program will look like, ensuring a clear understanding of its quality, scope, and the benefits it provides to students and the state.

Overview of the Military Pathway Program

The Military Pathway Program allows students to complete two units within an approved sequence of courses designed to support their preparation for military service. These courses provide foundational knowledge, skill-building, and real-world applications aligned with military expectations. By completing these courses, students will develop critical skills in leadership, physical fitness, problem-solving, and career planning, all of which are essential for success in both military and civilian careers. The Military Pathway Program allows students to complete two units within an approved sequence of courses that support their preparation for military service. These courses include:

- **Introduction to Military Careers** – Provides an overview of military branches, career pathways, rank structures, and core responsibilities of service members.

Students explore the values, traditions, and leadership expectations within military environments. **What students gain:** A foundational understanding of military culture, career options, and expectations, helping them make informed decisions about military service.

- **ASVAB Essentials: Skills for Military Success** (*Prerequisite: Introduction to Military Careers*) – Prepares students for the ASVAB exam by strengthening skills in arithmetic reasoning, word knowledge, paragraph comprehension, and mechanical understanding. Success in this course helps students meet enlistment qualification requirements. **What students gain:** Improved test-taking strategies and subject-matter expertise that enhance their ability to achieve qualifying ASVAB scores for military enlistment. (Prerequisite: Introduction to Military Careers)
- **Military Health & Fitness** – Covers physical fitness standards required for military service, including strength training, endurance exercises, and mental resilience. Students learn about the importance of nutrition, injury prevention, and military fitness assessments. **What students gain:** Physical conditioning, self-discipline, and resilience, ensuring they meet or exceed the physical readiness standards for military service.
- **Career Foundations in Military Leadership** (*Prerequisite: ASVAB Essentials*) – Focuses on leadership principles, teamwork, and ethical decision-making in military contexts. Students engage in scenarios that build communication, discipline, and problem-solving skills necessary for leadership roles. **What students gain:** Strong leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities that prepare them for leadership roles within the military and beyond. (Prerequisite: ASVAB Essentials)
- **Military Leadership Capstone** (*Prerequisite: Completion of three other Military Pathway courses*) – A culminating experience where students apply learned concepts through project-based activities, job shadowing, or mentorship with military personnel. This course provides hands-on insights into leadership responsibilities and career readiness in military service. **What students gain:** Practical experience and professional networking opportunities that enhance their readiness for military service and career advancement. (Prerequisite: Completion of three other Military Pathway courses)

These courses provide students with foundational knowledge of military structure, leadership, physical fitness, and career planning. The curriculum is designed in partnership with the North Dakota National Guard, ensuring that students gain real-world insights and preparation aligned with military expectations.

Current Implementation & Enrollment Capacity

- The **first course** in the Military Pathway Program has already launched, with 36 enrollments demonstrating student interest.
- Subject to NDCDE receiving its appropriations request the program has the capacity to support **up to 1,500 enrollments** at no cost to students or schools, ensuring accessibility and equity in military career preparation.

Key Benefits & Addressing Common Questions

- 1. Why offer a scholarship if students already receive financial benefits from the Guard?**
 - a. This program ensures that students who wish to pursue post-secondary education have a clear pathway to do so, whether they choose to enlist or seek further education. The scholarship provides flexibility in career planning and ensures multiple opportunities for student success.
- 2. What recruitment strategies will be used to engage students in the program?**
 - a. We are finalizing a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the North Dakota National Guard** to align recruitment efforts.
 - b. We will utilize similar pathways that the Guard already uses for recruitment, ensuring seamless access to interested students.
 - c. We will leverage our partnerships with public schools to increase awareness, especially among counselors.
- 3. How does this program align with broader education and workforce goals?**
 - a. One of the challenges that the military has cited with recruitment is “limited familiarity with the military in the general population”--this program allows students to gain this awareness.
 - b. The curriculum is developed **in-house**, as no comparable program currently exists. This ensures North Dakota remains at the forefront of military career education.
 - c. We have **aligned program standards with DPI and military requirements**, and we are working closely with the **Education Standards and Practice Board (ESPB)** to ensure quality instruction and teacher recruitment.

Conclusion

House Bill 1404 represents a critical step in expanding educational and career opportunities for North Dakota students. By formally integrating the Military Pathway into the Choice Ready framework, we are providing students with a clear, structured pathway toward military service, leadership development, and long-term career success. I urge you to support this bill to ensure North Dakota remains a leader in preparing students for military and workforce readiness.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will stand for any questions you may have.