

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1404  
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**January 29, 2025**

**By: Jim Upgren, Legislative Liaison and Assistant Director of School Approval  
and Opportunity**

**701-328-2244**

**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**

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Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jim Upgren, Legislative Liaison and Assistant Director in the Office of School Approval and Opportunity with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here on behalf of the department to speak in support of HB 1404.

The North Dakota Scholarship is a \$6000 college scholarship awarded to students based on requirements met while in high school. Any student that meets all the requirements of the scholarship gets a scholarship, regardless of how many students qualify. The North Dakota Scholarship requirements are aligned with North Dakota's Choice Ready high school accountability and quality metrics, but they are written with rigorous expectations above and beyond what is required for the basic Choice Ready baseline graduation requirements. Every student that qualifies for the scholarship will graduate Choice Ready, but not necessarily every student that graduates Choice Ready will qualify for the scholarship.

We created the North Dakota Scholarship chart because this is the best way to illustrate the scholarship requirements for schools, students, and parents, and I have

included a copy of the chart with my testimony for your reference. To have a chance to qualify for the scholarship, students must first meet four of the eight Essential Skills at the top of the chart in the yellow section. At the bottom of the chart are three pathways in blue: Post-Secondary Ready (on the left), Workforce Ready (in the middle), and Military Ready (on the right). Students who have a 3.0 grade-point-average and have met the Essentials Skills section at the top of the chart, and then meet the requirements of at least two of the three pathways at the bottom of the chart qualify for the North Dakota Scholarship.

HB 1404 creates two additional options for students to meet the indicators of the ND Scholarship. The first of those options would allow students to substitute an equivalent score on the new NDA+ summative assessment for the testing requirement in the Postsecondary and Workforce Ready pathways. The second option creates a pathway of military courses that can be used in the Military Ready pathway. I will begin by talking about the option for the NDA+ summative assessment.

The Postsecondary Ready pathway currently requires students to have either an ACT score of 24 or higher or an SAT score of 1180 or higher, and the Workforce Ready pathway requires an ACT of 24, SAT of 1180, or scores of 5 or higher on each of the three WorkKeys assessments (Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, Workplace Documents). HB 1404 would allow our new summative accountability assessment, the North Dakota Academic Progression of Learning and Understanding of Students

(abbreviated as NDAPLUS, or NDA+) to meet this requirement if the student receives a scale score of equal or greater academic rigor to a 24 on the ACT. This can be found on page 1, lines 9 through 12 for the Postsecondary Ready pathway, and on page 2, lines 18 through 21 for the Workforce Ready pathway. Because this is the first school year in which the NDA+ summative assessment will be given, we do not yet know what that equivalent scale score will be, and this process will take a year or two. Stan Schauer, the director in our Office of Assessment, is present today and can answer any questions specific to the NDA+ or the procedure for determining an NDA+ summative assessment scale score that is of equivalent academic rigor to a 24 on the ACT.

The Military Ready pathway currently requires an ASVAB score of 50 or higher, a C or better in the required PE course, and two indicators from either the Postsecondary or Workforce Ready pathways. HB 1404 would allow a pathway of military courses to substitute for the requirement of having two indicators from the other two pathways. This can be found on page 4, lines 2 through 7. To meet the requirements of the military coursework pathway, a student would need to earn two credits from any combination of Introduction to Military Careers, ASVAB Essentials: Skills to Military Success, Military Health and Fitness, Career Foundations in Military Leadership, and Military Leadership Capstone. The North Dakota Center for Distance Education has begun to offer the first of these courses, and they were also recently added as an option under the Military Ready pathway for Choice Ready. This pathway

is an excellent way for students to learn more about the military and decide whether to pursue a career in the military.

One other thing that the bill does is that it removes some obsolete language regarding the ACT when used for accountability. One of the options students have for additional indicators under the Workforce Ready pathway is scoring proficient or better in both reading and math on the state's annual accountability assessment. Prior to the 2024-2025 school year, schools had the option to use the ACT as its accountability assessment. However, starting with the 2024-2025 school year, all students will take the new NDA+ summative assessment in tenth grade as the annual accountability assessment. Because the last cohort of students to take the ACT for accountability were juniors last year, the Class of 2025 would be the last class that could possibly use the ACT for accountability as one of its indicators. Therefore, the bill strikes language on page 3, lines 14 through 16, related to the use of the ACT for accountability, and this would take effect starting with the 2025-2026 school year.

NDDPI fully supports HB 1404 to allow students additional options that are the same level of rigor as the options currently available to qualify for the ND Scholarship. I request that the committee give HB 1404 a "Do Pass" recommendation.

Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony and I will stand for any questions that you may have.