

Testimony of Deborah Roberts
Educator, Solen Public School District #3
In Support of HB 1475
February 3, 2025

Chairman Heinert, Vice Chairman Schreiber-Beck and members of the House Education Committee:

My name Deborah Roberts and I have been an elementary school teacher in western North Dakota for 41 years. I have seen the positive impact free breakfasts and lunches can have on the students in the schools where I have taught.

For the past 27 years, I have taught on the Standing Rock Reservation and I currently serve as Title I teacher and librarian at Cannonball Elementary School. In my nearly three decades at Standing Rock I have seen first-hand the impact food insecurity has on students. For many, the meals they get at school will be the only meals they get every day. It is hard for a student to be concerned about reading, math, or writing when they are worried about when they will eat next.

I want to emphasize to you that this is NOT an issue unique to Native American schools and students. Prior to teaching in Fort Yates and Cannonball, I taught in a rural western North Dakota school where food insecurities were also prevalent, just not to the extent it is at my current school. Students often came to school hungry and the food we provided was likely the only nutritional meals they received each day.

It is my hope, and the hope of teachers throughout North Dakota, that a state awash in money could see to the needs of its most vulnerable citizens, and the ones we are going to look to for the future success of this state.

Through no fault of their own, kids in schools may be going hungry. It's not their fault. They didn't ask to be in that situation. We, as educators, see it daily. And you, as legislators, have it in your power to do something truly positive to improve the lives of children – our next generation – in a life-changing way.

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