

1 HB 1475 –House Education Committee – By: Joan Knoll, Licensed Registered
2 Dietitian for the Child Nutrition Program at Bismarck Public School District,
3 Member of the School Nutrition Association.

4 Chairman Heinert and Member of the Committee:

5 My name is Joan Knoll, and I have been a Registered Dietitian in the Child Nutrition
6 Program for Bismarck Public Schools for the past fifteen years. I am here today,
7 providing testimony in favor of HB 1475.

8 I have a unique viewpoint regarding our students’ nutrition at BPS. I have been
9 teaching nutrition in all schools, including the elementary, middle, and high schools,
10 for fifteen years. I have taught approximately 15,000 students in 1200 classrooms
11 throughout that time.

12 One topic I teach in EVERY presentation is the importance of breakfast. I
13 consistently ask students, “Raise your hands if you did NOT eat breakfast today?”.
14 I observed that about 30-50 % of students would raise their hands no matter the
15 socioeconomics of the school. Many of our students are not eating a balanced
16 breakfast at home for many reasons (i.e. time, working parents, early bus times, food
17 availability, etc). After BPS began offering free breakfasts to students in our six
18 CEP schools, I noted the classes I taught in the mornings were calmer, more alert,
19 and more engaged. It was the same when we had free breakfasts and lunches
20 following the COVID years. Once we implemented our breakfast carts at two of our
21 middle schools, I, noted the same for them as well. My son was a student at Simle
22 Middle School when we began the pilot program of our “Second Chance Breakfast
23 Cart” during home base time. I remember as a working, busy parent being relieved
24 that he could eat from the breakfast cart at school if he was running late or if it was

1 a stressful morning (which is most mornings with a family going in different
2 directions). Eating breakfast closer to learning time nourishes students' brains which
3 improves their concentration, energy, and attentiveness in the classroom which
4 ultimately contributes to better learning. For teachers, students who are fueled well
5 and prepared to learn are easier to teach which makes classrooms easier to manage.

6 Another main topic in my presentation is school lunches. I focus on the MyPlate,
7 which is a visual of the five food groups, to teach them about balance in meal
8 planning. School lunch is an ideal example with research indicating that school lunch
9 tends to be more nutritionally balanced compared to packed lunches brought from
10 home. From my thousands of interactions with students, it appears that our lunches
11 offer a greater variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and nutrient-rich
12 calcium and protein sources than they may have at home. For example, a student
13 could take up to at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables between breakfast and
14 lunch. It is difficult for many parents to provide that amount of variety of nutritious
15 food choices at home. Every day, our students are consistently offered good dairy
16 and protein choices, a fresh vegetable and fruit bar, whole grain-rich foods, and
17 legumes, i.e. black beans, edamame, baked beans, and chili with beans. In addition,
18 I have observed that many students have not had some of the food items that are
19 offered on our menus. It is important for children and teens to be exposed to a variety
20 of healthy food choices regularly to help them form healthy habits into their
21 adulthood.

22 In conclusion, by giving a “do-pass” for healthy school meals for all is an investment
23 in the health and well-being of our children. This initiative is a win for our students
24 and their families and for the teachers that devote their lives to teaching our students.

- 1 On behalf of Bismarck Public Schools and the North Dakota School Nutrition
- 2 Association I urge you to support HB 1475.