



Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

As the state's largest hunger-relief organization and its only food bank, the Great Plains Food Bank supports House Bill 1475 and encourages the committee to recommend a "do-pass" on HB1475 to provide free school meals to children across North Dakota. With this bill, we have an opportunity to take impactful steps toward ending childhood hunger across our state.

We believe that when you feed a child, you feed the future. Last year, more than 54,000 North Dakota children (1 in 3 children) were served through the Great Plains Food Bank and our network of charitable hunger relief programs. Our trio of childhood hunger-relief programs – backpack program, school pantry program and youth summer meals program – along with our network of 200 partner food pantries across the state are feeding kids every day while they are home. But this does nothing to feed them while they are in school when they are trying to learn and to grow.

Daily we hear from teachers, administrators, and counselors that hunger among school-aged children continues to be an issue. We, at the Great Plains Food Bank have a responsibility to keep our children fed, but we can't do it alone. The only way we will eradicate childhood hunger is, together, with public, private, and nonprofit entities working alongside each other.

Thank you for your consideration and support of HB1475.

Melissa Sobolik  
CEO

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