

Legislative Assembly

North Dakota House of Representatives

STATE CAPITOL
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Representative Anna Novak

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COMMITTEES:

Education
Energy and Natural Resources (Vice Chair)

January 29, 2025

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee:

For the record, my name is Anna Novak, representative from district 33. House Bill 1476 directs the state to do an assessment of all of the public school buildings in North Dakota and to study appropriate criteria standards for public school buildings.

This is my second session in the legislature and my second session sitting on the Education committee. Last session, we dealt with a few different bills that made it obvious to the committee that there is a lot of inequity across the state when it comes to education. I think everyone recognizes that there are going to be pros and cons when living in an urban or rural district. Living in Hazen, my kids don't have hundreds of in-person course offerings available; however, they have smaller class sizes and my kids' teachers go above and beyond for them. One of my kids, who shall remain nameless, hasn't always gotten the great grades he gets now. He is kind of the class clown and while everyone loves him, he has a tendency to get distracted and also distract others. That's not easy for teachers to deal with. But his teacher, who is also a coach, thought outside the box and came up with a special plan for my son. If he is well-behaved and doesn't lose many behavior points during the week, he gets to stay in from recess and play a game of his choice with the teacher, whom he adores. That doesn't happen everywhere. So like I said, I'll take fewer class options for my great school community any day!

The inequity I'm referring to has to do with severe underfunding, which is why the "School Funding Task Force" interim committee was created. I sat on the committee. During the interim, we discussed problems with the school funding formula, relating to schools not receiving enough money to operate even a skeleton crew of teachers, very high transportation costs because they have a large in land sized school district, and schools that have an incredible amount of deferred maintenance that they just cannot currently afford to deal with, and quite frankly may never be able to afford because they don't have enough residents to spread the loan out amongst.

A group of educators and others formed the "School Construction Coalition" and did a generic assessment of a few schools in the state. They presented their results to our committee during the interim and I was shocked and saddened by what they shared with us. They are here today and I'll let them tell their own story.

North Dakota's constitution says that our state has a responsibility to offer a quality public school education to students grades K-12. But we are in a situation in which many of our schools are in really tough condition. I've heard people say things like the previous administrators in these schools are to blame because they continued to kick the can down the road on deferred maintenance. But I disagree with that. In a small school district like mine, they would have to defer any other sort of maintenance for something like 10 years to deal with replacing just the boiler. So, no gymnasium floor refinishing, no new windows or doors, no updates to the parking lot. It's just not feasible with their small budgets.

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO

HOUSE BILL NO. 1476

Introduced by

Representatives Novak, Heinert, Nelson, Richter, Schreiber-Beck

Senator Kessel

1 A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter ~~15.1-02~~54-44 of the North
2 Dakota Century Code, relating to the assessment of all public school buildings.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 ~~SECTION 1. A new section to chapter 15.1-02 of the North Dakota Century Code is created~~
5 ~~and enacted as follows:~~

6 ~~School buildings - Assessment - Rules.~~

7 ~~The superintendent of public instruction:~~

8 ~~1. Shall regularly assess each building located on school grounds in the state, including~~
9 ~~the interior and exterior of the building, doors, windows, fire sprinklers, components of~~
10 ~~heating, cooling, plumbing, electrical, and security systems, and handicap accessibility~~
11 ~~features.~~

12 ~~2. Develop and maintain a system for tracking the assessments of buildings, including~~
13 ~~construction, repairs, modifications, and maintenance recommended for each school.~~

14 ~~3. Shall adopt rules under chapter 28-32 to implement this section.~~

15 ~~4. May contract for professional services to implement this section, including contracting~~
16 ~~to study appropriate criteria to establish for public school facility standards.~~

17 **SECTION 1.** A new section to chapter 54-44 of the North Dakota Century Code is created
18 and enacted as follows:

19 **School buildings - Assessment - Rules.**

20 The director of the office of management and budget:

FISCAL NOTE
HOUSE BILL NO. 1476
LC# 25.1137.02000
01/21/2025

1 - State Fiscal Effect

Identify the state fiscal effect and the fiscal effect on agency appropriations compared to funding levels and appropriations anticipated under current law.

	2023-2025 Biennium		2025-2027 Biennium		2027-2029 Biennium	
	General Fund	Other Funds	General Fund	Other Funds	General Fund	Other Funds
Revenues						
Expenditures			\$2,250,000		\$2,250,000	
Appropriations						

2 - County, City, School District, and Township Fiscal Effect

Identify the fiscal effect on the appropriate political subdivision.

	2023-2025 Biennium	2025-2027 Biennium	2027-2029 Biennium
Counties			
Cities			
School Districts			
Townships			

3 - Bill and Fiscal Impact Summary

Provide a brief summary of the measure, including description of the provisions having fiscal impact (limited to 300 characters).

HB 1476 requires the superintendent of public instruction to regularly assess school buildings and to develop and maintain a system for tracking the assessments and building maintenance.

4 - Fiscal Impact Sections Detail

Identify and provide a brief description of the sections of the measure which have fiscal impact. Include any assumptions and comments relevant to the analysis.

NDDPI would contract to perform the work required in this bill as the department does not have anyone on staff experienced in building assessments. The department is estimating that it would cost \$15,000 per building to assess the property. The fiscal note also assumes that buildings would be assessed every 5 years. The state currently has 375 school buildings, the cost to assess all school buildings is estimated to be \$5.625 million. Using a 5-year rotation, the biennium cost would be 2/5 of the \$5.625 million or \$2.25 million.