

1 North Dakota School Study Council Testimony in Support HB 1494 – ELL
2 Weighting Factor

3 Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee,

4 I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1494, which seeks to
5 increase funding for English Language Learners (ELL) in our schools. This
6 bill represents an important step in addressing the financial and structural
7 challenges associated with ELL education. The ELL population in North
8 Dakota is growing, especially in the larger districts.

9 The cost of educating ELL students is significantly higher than that of their
10 native English-speaking peers. These students require specialized
11 instruction, additional staffing, and targeted interventions to ensure their
12 academic success. Without adequate funding, schools struggle to provide
13 the necessary resources, leaving ELL students at a disadvantage.

14 One of the most pressing needs in ELL education is access to technology.
15 Many ELL students rely on language-learning software, online resources,
16 and digital tools to enhance their language acquisition and academic
17 progress. However, current funding levels do not provide sufficient support
18 for schools to invest in the necessary technology. Increasing funding
19 through HB 1494 would help bridge this gap and allow for greater
20 integration of technology in ELL classrooms.

21 Additionally, the current weighting factors used to determine funding for
22 ELL programs are outdated and insufficient. The needs of ELL students
23 have grown, and the current funding formula does not adequately reflect
24 the true cost of providing a high-quality education for this population. HB
25 1494 is a step in the right direction to ensure that funding levels more
26 accurately reflect the resources required to support ELL students
27 effectively. I want to remind you; ELL students are tested yearly for
28 funding/placement into different levels. There are no phantom students or
29 numbers. These are real students who need additional services.

30 By passing HB 1494, the legislature would be taking a meaningful step
31 toward addressing these critical issues. While more work remains to be
32 done, this bill lays the foundation for future improvements in ELL education
33 and demonstrates a commitment to equity and inclusion in our schools.

34 I urge you to support HB 1494 and advocate for its passage. Thank you for
35 your time and consideration. I am happy to provide further information or
36 answer any questions you may have.

37 

38 Dr. Paul Stremick