



1 **Testimony in Support of House Bill 1494**

2 Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee, I stand before you today in strong support of  
3 House Bill 1494, which seeks to increase the weighting factors for English Learner (EL) students  
4 in our state’s school funding formula. This is not just a policy adjustment—it is a critical and  
5 necessary investment in ensuring that our schools, particularly our larger districts, have the  
6 resources needed to effectively serve a growing and diverse student population.

7 **The Urgent Need for Increased EL Funding**

8 North Dakota’s student population is rapidly evolving, with many of our larger school districts  
9 experiencing significant growth in EL enrollment. These students bring with them a wealth of  
10 potential, but also unique challenges that require additional instructional support, specialized  
11 staffing, and targeted interventions.

12 Currently, the funding allocated for EL students does not reflect the true cost of providing high-  
13 quality instruction. Our educators are working tirelessly to support these students, but without  
14 adequate resources, we risk leaving them behind. Increasing the weighting for EL students is a  
15 direct investment in their academic success and future contributions to our state.

- 16 • The only amendment we’d ask for is adding more levels of service – thereby covering  
17 Levels 4 and 5.

18 **Why This Bill Matters for School Districts**

- 19 • Higher Concentrations of EL Students: Larger districts are experiencing a  
20 disproportionate increase in EL enrollment, often requiring more specialized teachers,  
21 interventionists, and language support services.  
22 • Greater Demand for Intensive Instruction: Many EL students arrive with limited English  
23 proficiency, and require smaller class sizes, individualized instruction, and additional  
24 academic supports to achieve proficiency.  
25 • Impact on General Education Classrooms: Without sufficient funding, resources are  
26 stretched thin, making it harder for teachers to balance EL instruction with meeting the  
27 needs of all students in the classroom.  
28 • Retention and Recruitment of EL Specialists: Schools must be able to attract and retain  
29 teachers who specialize in EL instruction, but without adequate funding, these positions  
30 are difficult to maintain.  
31 • Smaller districts have a more difficult time finding staffing – dollars could support  
32 incentivizing.

33 **HB 1494 Provides a Necessary Adjustment to the Funding Formula**

34 This bill would increase the weighting factors for students at different EL proficiency levels,  
35 ensuring that schools have the resources to meet the needs of these students at every stage of  
36 their language development. By recognizing the varying levels of proficiency, this adjustment



1 ensures more equitable funding that reflects the real costs of instruction and student support  
2 services.

3 **A Statewide Issue – Investing in North Dakota’s Future**

4 While the most immediate impact will be felt in our larger districts, this is a statewide issue.  
5 Many communities across North Dakota are welcoming new families, and schools must be  
6 equipped to support these students from day one. Investing in EL education is not just about  
7 meeting today’s needs—it is about ensuring that North Dakota’s workforce and communities  
8 continue to thrive for generations to come.

9 **Conclusion**

10 By passing HB 1494, you are ensuring that our schools have the funding necessary to provide  
11 quality education, close achievement gaps, and support the success of every student—regardless  
12 of language background. Our administrators, teachers, and EL students are counting on you to  
13 take this step forward in making our funding model more reflective of the real needs in our  
14 schools.

15 I urge you to support this bill and move it forward for passage.