

House Education Committee
Sixty-ninth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota
House Bill 1494

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lisa Symens, and I am the English Learner Department Coordinator for Bismarck Public Schools. Thank you for your attention to our growing multilingual learner population in North Dakota. I would like to express my strong support for HB 1494, which allows equal funding for English learners in K-12 schools at proficiency levels 1, 2, and 3. This legislation is essential for supporting the increasing needs of English learners and improving educational equity.

As someone deeply involved in education and the success of multilingual learners for the past 27 years, I have seen firsthand the challenges these students face and the incredible potential they bring to our schools and communities. Like many schools in North Dakota, Bismarck Public Schools has experienced significant growth in its English learner population over the past decade. This bill will help ensure that these students receive the resources and support they need to thrive academically and contribute meaningfully to our state's future workforce and communities.

With my support, I would propose two amendments to the bill. First, to include proficiency level 4 to align with our state requirements to serve students up to level 5 of English language proficiency. I would also propose to either remove the three-year cap for all proficiency levels or apply the cap consistently to all proficiency levels to better align with NDDPI's accountability measures to encourage steady, measurable language growth.

I urge you to vote in favor of HB 1494 to create a stronger, more inclusive education system that supports all students. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Symens

EL Department Coordinator
Bismarck Public Schools