



**HB 1498**

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Chair Heinert and Members of the Committee: My name is Carter Gill and I am Vice President of Governmental Affairs for the NDSA. I am here today in support of HB 1498.

The North Dakota Student Association is dedicated to ensuring that students have a voice at the table in policy that affects higher education. We consist of delegates from each of the 11 public North Dakota University System (NDUS) institutions, meeting monthly to engage students in discussions about North Dakota higher education policy. Since 1969, our mission has been to empower students, create collaboration between the student bodies of the North Dakota public universities, and to provide a student perspective on higher education policy.

This academic year, the NDSA passed [NDSA-01-2425](#), which laid out our legislative priorities for this biennium. One of our priorities was to ensure that NDUS students enter workforces in emerging technologies with an emphasis on the North Dakota workforce. One of the workforces in this state that now more than ever is interacting and innovating with emerging technologies is education. Teachers are on the front lines when it comes to working with generative AI and implementing it in the classroom and ensuring that their students are ethically and responsibly utilizing AI and other technologies.

However, due to a wide range of factors, new teachers, many who have gotten their degrees from an NDUS institution, are leaving North Dakota to teach in other states. I will say that salary and benefits are not always a driving factor because looking at salaries along the Red River, Grand Forks Public Schools and East Grand Forks Public Schools, along with Fargo/West Fargo Public Schools and Moorhead Public Schools, the North Dakota districts do pay more overall including benefits than Minnesota schools.

As someone looking for my first school district to start my teaching career at, the dollar amount that I see on job openings around the region is what I look at first. I can speak for many prospective first year teachers that although benefits such as insurance and retirement are important factors to look at while searching for a teaching job that total amount is the biggest draw for new teachers.

In the last academic year and excluding non-degree seeking students, education was the 5<sup>th</sup> highest enrolled program in the NDUS at almost 2,400 students. Allowing for this bonus gives upcoming graduates more incentive to stay in North Dakota to teach rather than leave to teach elsewhere. Also, a first year signing bonus would be a great way to draw first year teachers like myself and others in the NDUS to take a second look at those smaller schools that may not have a higher salary than other schools since that bonus could bump that total up to be more competitive with bigger schools.

Allowing school boards to offer these bonuses can also be a way to encourage NDUS graduates who may have graduated without an education degree to pursue the state's alternative means of licensure to help support a workforce that is in critical need.

On behalf of the North Dakota Student Association, I ask that you give HB 1498 a DO PASS recommendation.