

Honorable Chairperson Heinert and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1510, which seeks to enhance financial planning resources for new teachers and establish on-site child care options for educators in North Dakota. As the Coordinator of the ND RISE Teacher Support System, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that new teachers face, particularly in financial planning and balancing work and family responsibilities. This bill represents a crucial step in addressing these challenges, ultimately supporting teacher retention and well-being.

Financial Planning Resources for New Teachers

New teachers often enter the profession with significant student debt and limited financial literacy regarding retirement planning, insurance options, and benefits packages. House Bill 1510 proposes a collaborative effort among the Bank of North Dakota, the Teachers' Fund for Retirement Board, and the Teacher Support Program to provide comprehensive financial planning resources. These resources will offer:

- Clear comparisons of teacher salary matrices and insurance plans;
- Detailed descriptions of contract benefits;
- Guidance on retirement and deferred compensation plans under Internal Revenue Code section 457.

By compiling and distributing this information to teacher preparation programs and school districts, we can ensure that new educators make informed financial decisions early in their careers. Financial stability is a key factor in teacher retention, and equipping our educators with these tools will contribute to a more sustainable teaching workforce.

On-Site Child Care for Teachers

The lack of affordable and accessible child care is a significant barrier for educators who are also parents. Many teachers struggle with long waitlists, high costs, and logistical difficulties in securing child care that aligns with their work schedules. House Bill 1510 empowers school districts to provide or facilitate on-site child care services for teachers' children. This initiative will:

- Reduce stress and absenteeism among teachers;
- Improve teacher retention by offering a valuable employment benefit;
- Foster a stronger sense of community within school districts.

I urge the committee to support this initiative, recognizing that investing in teachers' well-being translates to greater stability and success for our students.

Legislative Management Study on a Health Insurance Pool

Additionally, I strongly support the proposed study on creating a health insurance pool for school district employees. Health care costs are a significant concern for educators, and a pooled insurance plan could provide more competitive rates, better coverage, and improved financial security. Conducting a thorough cost-benefit analysis will allow North Dakota to explore strategies used by other states and determine the best approach to maximize teachers' earnings and benefits.

House Bill 1510 is a forward-thinking initiative that acknowledges and addresses key challenges faced by our educators. By providing essential financial planning resources, expanding access to child care, and exploring a sustainable health insurance model, North Dakota can strengthen its teaching workforce and enhance student outcomes. I respectfully urge your support for this bill and look forward to working collaboratively to ensure its successful implementation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Erin Jacobson
Coordinator, ND RISE (Teacher Support System)