

HB 1510
House Education Committee
Rep. Pat Heinert, chair
February 10, 2025
Couteau AB Room, State Capitol

Good morning, Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education committee. For the record, my name is Maria Neset and I serve as Chief of Staff to Lt. Gov. Michelle Strinden and Senior Advisor to Gov. Kelly Armstrong. I am here to provide testimony that supports the Teacher Retention & Recruitment Task Force report and the funding requested to support our educators.

First, I would like to provide some background on the launch of the task force and the final report. And we would like to extend our gratitude to all the members on the task force who shared their expertise and time.

In the summer of 2023, Gov. Burgum received an emergency rules request from the Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) related to teacher shortages. The solution provided from some administrators was to give school districts additional flexibility that temporarily allowed expanded use of student teachers. It was shared that the teacher shortage had been a common concern for administrators in the summer as they were hiring for the start of the school year.

While not an ideal situation, Gov. Burgum granted the request for emergency rule making with the caveat that a task force related to teacher retention and recruitment to study the larger issue would be initiated. [Executive Order 2023-08](#) established the task force, and members were appointed from across various stakeholder groups. The task force met multiple times throughout the next several months to determine focus areas and finalized a report with recommendations to be delivered to the Governor and State Superintendent for consideration by the 69th Legislative Assembly.

I will quickly walk through the recommendations and specifically discuss the programs funded in the Armstrong executive budget proposal. The recommendations are a combination of policy, studies and budgetary requests. Please see the handout titled "[North Dakota Teacher Retention & Recruitment Task Force Report.](#)"

The task force supported seven recommendations:

- Provide a safe and supportive environment for educators and learners in every building.
- Reduce barriers for schools that wish to provide child care.
- Understand supportive school culture.
- Fund mentorship for educators and administrators.
- Fund educator pathways.
- Maximize benefits for educators.
- Optimize educator earnings.

I will now walk through the sections of the bill and explain how each section of House Bill 1510 connects to the report recommendations.

Section 1

The language in this section is intended to align with the "Maximize benefits for educators" recommendation. We heard from many around the task force that school districts are investing thousands of dollars above a salary in different areas on behalf of staff, and many times staff may not be aware or have not had the opportunity to truly understand how to maximize their benefits. This would ask for resources to be developed, such as handouts, webinars, in-person trainings, individual finance sessions or marketing materials for all schools, along with preparation programs to use when explaining salary matrices, high deductible health plans vs PPOs, and one or both sides paid of TFFR. This would help new teachers entering a district understand the value of what is available to them. This is an opportunity to support financial literacy for every teacher in North Dakota, as all could have access to the resources. Once the resources are made

available, we will partner with the Department of Public Instruction to distribute and share – specifically ND Rise, which can include this during its mentorship training sessions.

Section 2

Child care has been and continues to be a focus for the Armstrong/Strinden Administration. This section demonstrates a commitment to be a partner in supporting school districts to provide onsite child care. We see this as a tremendous tool for districts to recruit and retain educators in their communities.

Section 3

During the task force, we engaged in a session led by Edunomics that focused on maximizing every dollar spent, including when funding stays at current levels or increases at a minimal rate. This section is intended to support a study that looks at different opportunities to maximize dollars related to cost of health care and long-term earnings for teachers.

Section 4

The task force was committed to ensuring the work environment was a key focus. We recognize work is already underway to drive improvements through a statewide effort. The Armstrong budget recommends \$2 million be appropriated to DPI (HB 1013) to continue the statewide teacher retention program. This program is making remarkable efforts in districts across the state, and we need to sustain these efforts. Vital Network provided data and impact through their testimony last Friday. Our learners thrive when teachers and leaders are in a supportive work environment.

Section 5

The task force recognized the long-standing impact from the teacher mentorship program, formerly known as the Teacher Support System, now known as ND Rise. Administered through ESPB, this program shows measurable outcomes that are driving educator retention efforts. We have seen firsthand the importance of mentorship beyond just the first year.

Knowing this, the Armstrong budget proposes a \$2 million appropriation to DPI (above their base allocation of \$2.5 million) as a pass-through grants line to support ND Rise. The program shall include supports and resources for all first- to third-year teachers who meet the requirements outlined in NDCC or program guidance, as determined by ESPB.

While the bill seems to be quite modest — HB 1510 will show support for retaining and recruiting educators. As was stated at the start of the task force, there is no quick or easy solution. It will take all of us to advocate and demonstrate support for teachers across the state, step by step. We urge you support our educators by giving a do pass to HB 1510 with the provided amendments.

| | 21-23 | 23-25 | 25-27 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|
| ND Rise (mentorship) | State funds: \$2.1 million | State funds: \$2.5 million | State Funds (Base): \$2.5 million |
| | GEER funds: \$1.3 million | GEER funds: \$1.3 million | Armstrong proposed increase: \$2 million |
| | TOTAL: \$3.4 million | TOTAL: \$3.8 million | TOTAL: \$4.5 million |
| | | | |
| | 21-23 | 23-25 | 25-27 |
| Vital Network | Not Applicable | TOTAL: \$2.3 million <i>(allocated out of \$4.3 million)</i> | Armstrong proposed amount: \$2 million |