



Letter of Support – HB 1517

Tuesday, February 4, 2025

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

For the record, my name is Cale Dunwoody, and I have the distinct pleasure of serving as the Vice President of Public Policy for the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce (FMWF Chamber). On behalf of our over 1,700 members, I respectfully offer testimony in support of House Bill 1517.

At the FMWF Chamber, our mission is to protect and promote business, inspire individuals, cultivate communities, and influence action. North Dakotan schools are in critical need of qualified educators to fill workforce shortages and build a robust education system. In the 2023-2024 school year, all content areas were declared critical shortage zones, meaning there are too few qualified education professionals to fill positions.

While enrollment in North Dakota schools has increased, the number of teachers has remained stagnant. From fall 2011 to fall 2021, student enrollment increased by 21%, more than any other state. In comparison, the number of teaching degrees earned decreased by 19.5% between 2012 and 2020 (National Center for Education Statistics). An increase in demand for education services and a decrease in supply of educators stands to create a workforce shortage in the education sector.

Creative and innovative solutions, such as this, are critical to encouraging individuals to pursue impactful career fields, ultimately addressing critical workforce shortages. A loan repayment program for student teachers further incentivizes passionate individuals to pursue a career in teaching and supports new educators – reducing the financial burdens of student loans. Given the impact this program will have on the future education and workforce, we respectfully urge the committee to give HB 1517 a DO PASS recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cale Dunwoody".

Cale Dunwoody
Vice President of Public Policy
Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce