

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1530

Presented to the House Education Committee

North Dakota Legislative Assembly

Chairperson Heinert, Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Matt Liebel, and I am here today to voice my strong support for House Bill 1530, which calls for a legislative management study on the circumstances and needs of special education teachers and the ongoing special education teacher shortage in North Dakota.

I spent 15 years in Williston as a middle school science teacher, and I recently transitioned into a new role as a Field Consultant for North Dakota United. In this position, I have had the opportunity to work directly with educators across the state, including special education teachers, as part of the NDU SPED Collective. Through this collective, we listen to special education teachers share their daily struggles—challenges that include overwhelming caseloads, excessive paperwork, a lack of support, and difficulties in maintaining work-life balance. Their voices consistently highlight a systemic issue that requires urgent attention.

The Growing Special Education Crisis

The shortage of special education teachers is not just a staffing issue—it directly impacts students, schools, and communities. Special education teachers play an essential role in providing individualized support to students with unique learning needs, yet they are often overburdened, underpaid, and undervalued. Many educators in this field leave due to burnout or frustration, making it increasingly difficult for schools to provide the legally required services that students deserve.

This study is an important first step in understanding why special education teachers are leaving and what can be done to improve their working conditions, support structures, and overall job satisfaction. Without this data-driven approach, any solutions will be temporary fixes rather than meaningful, long-term reforms.

Why This Study Matters

By approving HB 1530, this legislature has the opportunity to take a proactive approach in addressing the challenges within special education. This study will provide crucial insights into:

- The specific factors driving the special education teacher shortage
- The workload and administrative burdens that contribute to burnout
- Recruitment and retention strategies that could be implemented statewide
- Ways to better support special education teachers so they can best serve their students

Investing in this study means investing in our students, our educators, and the future of education in North Dakota. The findings will help guide policies that strengthen the profession and ensure that students with special needs receive the high-quality education they deserve.

I urge this committee to support House Bill 1530 and recognize the importance of studying this issue so that we can build a stronger, more sustainable special education workforce. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Liebel

Field Consultant, North Dakota United