

To the House Education Committee,

My name is Alex Maitheanas, a resident of Moorhead MN, and I am urging the committee to PASS HB 1553.

I want to start by sharing my experience. My mother lost her job in 2006, and was unable to find work for several years after her dismissal. My father needed to pick up 2 jobs in order to provide for her and 3 children. In Minnesota, we qualified for the free and reduced lunch program as we made under the income limit. But during my senior year of high school, my father made slightly over the limit (by maybe \$100), meaning we no longer qualified for free lunches. But \$100 was not enough to cover a year's worth of school lunches for the two of us that were still in the K-12 education system.

Almost two years ago, I remember watching with joy and excitement as Minnesota passed free school lunches for children into law. No longer would parents and children have to worry about the income limit- all students would be able to get free lunch regardless of the income. Minnesota showed that it genuinely cares about both the education and general wellbeing of its students, and North Dakota now has the opportunity to do the same.

I urge the committee to extend compassion to the state's youth and families by passing HB 1553.

Sincerely,

Alex Maitheanas