

Members of the House Education Committee

I'm a long-time resident of the State of ND writing to you in favor of HB1553. I support free school lunches for the children of North Dakota because as a child of a single mother, I know first hand just how valuable something like this can be for the children and their families. This is not something that only affects children of single parent families either. For many families, it is a struggle to make ends meet on a monthly basis, especially given the current cost of living crisis we are all experiencing.

Food insecurity affects families in all 53 counties in North Dakota. According to "School Lunch Debt Statistics" on EducationData.org, 16,900 children in our state are food insecure. This bill would considerably offset that, saving those families up to and more than \$850 a year. Many families in our state have to use food pantries to literally put food on the table. Children who are supported with healthy meals are much more likely to succeed academically, with reduced hunger being a great support to their health.

It is for these reasons mentioned that I firmly ask you to stand IN FAVOR of HB1553.

Thank you,

Scott Heidinger

Jamestown, ND