

**Testimony of Landis Larson, ND AFL-CIO President
In Support of HB 1553
February 10, 2025**

My name is Landis Larson, President of the North Dakota AFL-CIO. The North Dakota AFL-CIO is the federation of labor unions in North Dakota, representing the interests of all working people in our state.

I am testifying on behalf of the North Dakota AFL-CIO in support of House Bill 1553.

The North Dakota AFL-CIO and our affiliates resoundingly support universal free school meals for a number of reasons:

Working families are feeling the strain of increased prices when it comes to food, childcare, housing transportation, and more. Free school meals would mean an extra \$850 per child per year that working families keep in pocket. That money gets spent locally here in North Dakota and is good for the local economy.

Even with good union jobs, working families can surely use a bit extra to make ends meet.

We understand that that business is experiencing a workforce shortage, and we believe that free school meals would make North Dakota more competitive in attracting workers with young families.

When we think of targeted relief for working families in North Dakota, there is no more efficient and accountable method than providing nutrition in the form of meals while children are at school. We know exactly where that relief is going and how it's helping.

The North Dakota AFL-CIO and our union affiliates have repeatedly, year after year, passed resolutions and motions of support at union meetings and state conventions in support of this issue.

We will continue to spend our time and resources talking about free school meals because it is such a common sense idea that our members deeply care about. It's also the right thing to do for our kids.

This is exactly the kind of bold economic relief that working families will appreciate for generations to come. We hope you can support a "Do Pass" on House Bill 1553 and be part of history in passing one of the most popular and meaningful bi-partisan bills in a generation.

I have attached the list of organizations who are part of the Together for School Meals coalition that are also in support of free school meals..



Together for School Meals is a coalition of food security organizations, school nutrition professionals, registered dietitians, educational leaders, and advocacy organizations united with a shared purpose: ensuring that every child in North Dakota has access to healthy, nutritious meals at school. Together, we aim to make **School Meals for All** a reality—because no child should have to learn on an empty stomach.

- AFSCME Council 65
- Aggie Foundation
- American Heart Association
- BCTGM Local 167G
- Blue Zones Project Grand Forks
- Boys & Girls Clubs of the Red River Valley
- Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees - International Brotherhood of Teamsters (BMWED-IBT)
- Canopy Medical Clinic
- Carl Ben Eielson Fargo Public Schools
- Cass Clay Hunger Coalition
- College Smart
- Communications Workers of America Local 7303
- Community Healthcare Association of the Dakotas
- Creating A Hunger Free North Dakota
- Ehrens Consulting
- Fargo Cass Public Health
- Fargo Cass Public Health Harm Reduction
- Fargo Education Association
- Fargo Firefighters Local 642
- Fargo Public School Board
- FM Coalition To End Homelessness
- Food Research & Action Center
- Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota
- Great Plains Food Bank
- Great Plains Housing Authority
- Hope 4 All Interfaith Community
- IAM Local 2525
- IBEW Local 714
- IBEW Local 1593
- Indigenous Association
- Interfaith Alliance of North Dakota
- LiUNA Minnesota and North Dakota
- Lunch Aid North Dakota
- Missouri Slope Central Labor Council
- National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 205
- New American Consortium for Wellness & Empowerment
- North Dakota AFL-CIO
- North Dakota Afterschool Network
- North Dakota Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics
- North Dakota Farmers Union
- North Dakota Human Rights Coalition
- North Dakota KIDS COUNT
- North Dakota PTA
- North Dakota School Nutrition Association
- North Dakota United
- Northern Plains United Labor Council, AFL-CIO
- Northern Valley Labor Council AFL-CIO
- Oakes Public Schools Parent Teacher Organization
- OPCMIA Local 633
- Our Savior's Lutheran Church
- Pembina United Methodist Church
- Prairie Action North Dakota Institute
- Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota
- Reform Fargo
- Rolla Education Association
- Solen Education Association
- St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Fargo
- Stutsman Human Rights Coalition
- The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota
- The Northern Plains Conference, United Church of Christ
- The Prairie Blog
- The Salvation Army
- United Steelworkers Local 560
- United Steelworkers Local 566
- United Steelworkers 663
- United Steelworkers 901B
- USpireND - Healthy Families
- West Area Labor Council
- West Fargo Eats.
- YMCA of the Northern Sky