

**House Education Committee
HB 1553 - Testimony in Favor
February 9, 2025**

Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 1553. Over the past seventeen years, I've worked with students from preschool to high school—first as a paraeducator, then as a special education teacher, and most recently as a school counselor. The unrealistic expectation for all families to pay for their school lunches hurts our students, as well as our school districts.

Although there are free and reduced meal plans, not all families who could benefit qualify—and not all families who qualify are comfortable completing the application process. We know students perform better academically when their basic needs are met. We also know that some children's school lunch might be their only hot meal of the day.

For the families who cannot afford their lunch bill, these debts place an undue burden on the school district. With increased budget cuts and annual expenses, funds to cover these costs could be better spent elsewhere—perhaps on the staff we have lost due to funding shortages.

I urge you to please vote YES on HB 1553.

Thank you,
Shannon Krueger
District 3
Minot, ND