



Oakes Public School

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Monday, February 10, 2025

Representative Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee:

I am Anna Sell, Superintendent of Oakes Public Schools, and I write in strong support of House Bill 1604. Our district, like many others in North Dakota, faces a dire situation due to aging facilities and inadequate funding for maintenance. The feeling of hopelessness is common among our districts that are struggling with this issue.

Since stepping into this role in 2022, I have faced tough decisions—spending \$800,000 to reinforce a deteriorating third-story floor and depleting our funds. In May 2023, our 40-year-old chiller failed, leaving our 100-year-old brick school without air conditioning and causing further damage, such as warped gym floors.

A facility assessment confirmed the worst: we need millions for essential HVAC, electrical, and plumbing repairs. Yet, our tax levy cannot generate enough revenue, and a \$14.84 million referendum failed in March 2024. We are now trying again, but each winter day, I worry a critical failure could force our school to close.

Without state intervention, Oakes Public Schools—and others like us—are at risk. I urge you to support HB 1604. My 485 students deserve safe, functioning schools that are adequate and equitable.

Sincerely,
Anna Sell