



North Dakota Small Organized Schools

Mr. Michael Heilman
Executive Director
3144 Hampton Street
Bismarck, ND 58504
mheilmanndsos@gmail.com
701-527-4621

Mr. Brandt Dick
President
1929 N. Washington Steet. Ste.A
Bismarck, ND 58501
Brandt.Dick@k12.nd.us
701-415-0441

Mr. Steven Heim
Vice-President
PO Box 256
Drake, ND 58736
Steve.heim@k12.nd.us
701-465-3732

1 **Testimony in Support of HB1604**

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3 Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,
4
5 North Dakota Small Organized Schools stands in support of HB 1604, a critical step forward in ensuring
6 that our students have access to safe, modern, and effective learning environments. This legislation will
7 provide necessary state funding for school construction, addressing the urgent infrastructure needs
8 faced by many school districts across our state.
9

10 **The Need for HB1604**

11 Many of our school buildings are aging, with some having deteriorated to a point where renovation is
12 not cost-effective. HB1604 establishes clear eligibility requirements to ensure that state funds are
13 directed toward districts that have demonstrated a significant need. The bill prioritizes schools where
14 the cost of renovation exceeds 60% of the cost of new construction, ensuring that taxpayer dollars are
15 spent wisely. Furthermore, by requiring districts to attempt referendums before applying for state
16 funding, this legislation ensures local engagement and responsible fiscal management.
17

18 **Addressing Financial Barriers**

19 One of the most commendable aspects of HB1604 is its funding structure, which considers the financial
20 capacity of each school district. By using a sliding scale based on the value of a mill, the bill ensures that
21 districts with lower property tax revenue receive a higher percentage of state assistance. This equitable
22 approach guarantees that every student, regardless of where they live, has access to quality school
23 facilities.
24

25 **Encouraging Responsible Planning**

26 HB1604 also introduces necessary accountability measures to ensure the long-term viability of school
27 construction projects. The requirement for school districts to demonstrate a plan for funding building
28 maintenance prevents future financial shortfalls and ensures that new facilities remain in excellent
29 condition for generations to come. Additionally, the bill promotes efficient design by incentivizing the
30 use of state-approved architectural plans, further maximizing the impact of state funding.
31

32 **Supporting Educational Success**

33 Modern school facilities are essential for student success. Research has consistently shown that
34 updated, well-maintained school buildings lead to improved academic performance, higher teacher

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The mission of NDSOS is to provide leadership for the small/rural schools in North Dakota and to support legislation favorable to their philosophy while opposing legislation that is harmful.

35 retention, and better overall student well-being. Many of our districts are struggling with outdated
36 facilities that hinder learning, and HB1604 provides a much-needed solution to this growing problem.

37

38 **Conclusion**

39 House Bill 1604 represents a responsible and forward-thinking investment in the future of our state. By
40 providing targeted, needs-based funding for school construction, this legislation will ensure that every
41 child has access to a safe and conducive learning environment. I urge the committee to support and
42 advance HB1604, recognizing the profound impact it will have on our schools, students, and
43 communities.

44 I respectfully ask for your support of HB1604.

45

46 Mr. Michael Heilman – Executive Director

47 North Dakota Small Organized Schools

48 mheilmandsos@gmail.com

49 701.527.4621

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