

1 **Testimony for HB 1160 and SB 2354 – Cell Phone Use**

2 *Dr. Jeff Fastnacht, Superintendent, Bismarck Public Schools*

3 Good morning, House and Senate Education

4 I am providing testimony in support of the need to provide legislative support to
5 schools and school districts as we adapt to the evolving landscape of technology
6 use by our children within the school setting. The research is piling up that our
7 children, we as humans, are being negatively affected by screen time and the
8 constant bombardment of messages, notifications, beeps, and rings. Our present
9 reality of how cell phones and technology are interfacing with our personal lives is
10 impacting the ability of our students to engage fully in the learning environment.

11 I will be speaking to both House Education and Senate Education this morning on
12 this topic. I fully support legislation that allows school districts the ability to
13 develop comprehensive policies to address technology use, including cell phones,
14 during instructional time. We need your support with legislation, but I would also
15 ask that we have legislation that allows us to adapt and change as technologies
16 continue to evolve. Both committees have heard testimony about how
17 technology can be used effectively in the classroom, and we want to retain that
18 ability to use these tools when they advance the learning of our children. You
19 have also heard about the specific ways technology is supporting students with
20 Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). You must craft legislation that allows our
21 teams to navigate the wide of needs we see in our students and how technology
22 is supporting them. You have also heard about students who use technology for
23 health-related concerns; again, we need your support to be able to navigate those

1 issues. Each of these issues is best addressed at the local level in sound and
2 community-developed policy. We need community support to move this issue
3 forward, and working with our parents and community members to determine
4 what is best for our kids will make wise policy. For these reasons, I would ask both
5 committees to lend their collective support to HB 1160. BPS and other school
6 leaders have been working with Rep. Jonas since its initial hearing, and we feel it
7 is the best vehicle to achieve what we all desire. A school environment that is
8 focused on education, rather than the distractions that technology often brings
9 into our lives.