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SB 2354

**Testimony of Amy De Kok
House Education Committee
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Chairman Heinert and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Amy De Kok, and I am the Executive Director for the North Dakota School Boards Association (NDSBA). NDSBA represents all 168 public school districts and their governing boards. I am here in support of SB 2354, a bill that ensures school districts adopt policies regarding the use of personal electronic devices while preserving local decision-making authority. The bill appropriately acknowledges the evolving role of technology in education while balancing the need for structure, discipline, and student well-being in the classroom.

SB 2354 requires school districts to implement policies by August 1, 2026, that minimize or prohibit student use of personal electronic devices during school hours, with exceptions that recognize both educational benefits and individual student needs. Importantly, the bill provides flexibility for teachers to integrate technology into their instructional methods while ensuring that student health and disability-related accommodations are fully supported.

By allowing local school boards to work directly with educators, parents, and students, SB 2354 fosters policies that align with the specific needs of each school community. This approach respects the diversity of educational environments across North Dakota and enables schools to develop evidence-based strategies that optimize student engagement and learning outcomes.

SB 2354 takes a similar approach to HB 1160, which is currently being heard in the Senate. Both bills emphasize the importance of local control, ensuring that school districts maintain the flexibility to craft policies that best serve their unique student populations. Like HB 1160, SB 2354 strikes a balance between maintaining classroom discipline, promoting effective instructional use of technology, and recognizing necessary accommodations for students with medical or educational needs.

The bill also includes several key provisions that enhance its effectiveness:

- **Educational Flexibility** – Teachers may allow students to use personal electronic devices when such use aligns with instructional goals, ensuring that technology remains a tool for learning rather than a distraction.
- **Medical and Disability Accommodations** – Students who require personal electronic devices for health management or accessibility under an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 plan are granted appropriate accommodations in accordance with federal law.
- **Community Engagement** – School districts are required to solicit input from stakeholders, including parents, educators, and students, ensuring that local perspectives shape policies that are practical and effective.
- **Ongoing Policy Review** – The bill mandates an annual review of personal electronic device policies, allowing school districts to adapt to emerging research and best practices in technology use for student learning and well-being.

This legislation reflects a thoughtful approach to managing personal electronic devices in schools, balancing discipline with educational innovation. It acknowledges that while electronic devices can pose challenges to classroom focus and student well-being, they also offer valuable educational tools when used appropriately. By maintaining local control and prioritizing student needs, SB 2354 supports a responsive, adaptable approach to personal electronic device policies in schools.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to support SB 2354. Thank you for your time and consideration.