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Beulah School District #27

204 5th St NW
Beulah, ND 58523
Phone: 701-873-2237
Carl Blackhurst, Superintendent

To: North Dakota State Legislators

Subject: Consideration for Ratification of HB 1279

Dear North Dakota Legislators,

As Superintendent of Beulah Public Schools, I am writing in regard to HB 1279 and to request your consideration of necessary adjustments to the proposed coal severance and conversion formula. I am a steadfast supporter of the coal industry and am deeply grateful to have this valuable resource in Mercer County. The coal industry has long been a pillar of our local economy, providing jobs and essential revenue that directly benefit our communities, municipalities, and schools.

However, as our district continues to face rising operational and infrastructure costs, it is imperative that we examine ways to ensure continued financial stability without placing an undue burden on local taxpayers. The in-lieu-of-tax dollars generated by coal production are a vital component of my district's budget, helping to sustain essential educational services and facility maintenance. In light of increasing costs, I respectfully request adjustments to the coal severance and conversion formula that would enhance contributions made by the coal industry to better support our schools, municipalities, and local governments.

To illustrate our district's financial needs, we have recently completed a \$10.1 million high school renovation project to maintain and improve educational facilities for our students. Additionally, the rising costs of supplies, consumables, and transportation continue to challenge our ability to provide the necessary resources for quality education. Looking ahead, Beulah Public Schools is facing between \$16.2 million and \$22.2 million in deferred maintenance costs to ensure that our facilities remain safe, functional, and capable of supporting student success. These financial challenges underscore the need for increased revenue sources that do not solely rely on increased taxation for local patrons.

By adjusting the percentages applied to the coal severance and conversion formula, we can ensure that coal-producing counties, cities, and school districts receive a fair share of the revenue generated by this industry. Such an increase would provide a significant financial boost to Coal Country municipalities, allowing us to meet the demands of maintaining and improving public infrastructure while continuing to provide high-quality educational opportunities for our students.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this request. I urge you to support the necessary adjustments to HB 1279 to strengthen our communities, sustain our schools, and ensure a balanced approach to funding our essential services. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

Carl Blackhurst
Superintendent