

Good afternoon, Chairs Representative Vigesaa and Senator Bekkedahl, and members of the Joint Appropriations Committee. My name is Katie Cashman Fitzsimmons and though I serve as the Director of Student Affairs for the North Dakota University System, today I present to you as a parent asking for your support on HB 1624.

My husband and I have three kids, each enrolled in Kindergarten, 3rd grade, and 5th grade. Since August 2025, we have spent \$1,662.40 on school meals for our kids and we're on track to spend another \$1400 before the end of the school year. To have this relief would be huge for our family as costs all around us are skyrocketing. We can't leave the grocery store for less than \$250 and to keep up with all other costs that come with having a family and a modest home, it feels like we are hemorrhaging cash every minute of each day.

I was thrilled with the \$1600 property tax relief; seeing that bill last month felt fantastic; thank you for that! But then my mind went immediately to those that rent their homes and did not see that relief. This bill would be a wonderful equalizer for families with kids in public or private schools all while simply doing the right thing for our kids.

All North Dakotan legislators have been so careful and responsible with our tax dollars; I appreciate the tough decisions you have made and the conservative moves you have planned. But we can also have nice things and make things easier when it makes sense. This policy not only makes sense from a public health perspective; we have the knowledge that it will be good for all families and we have the money to pay for it. Truly, this feels like a no-brainer.

Thank you for your careful consideration for this and all other issues you'll be considering this week during the special session. Happy New Year to you and yours and please vote green on HB 1624.

Very Sincerely,
Katie Cashman Fitzsimmons
Bismarck, ND
District 35