

1 SB 2213 – Relating to Mathematics Requirements

2 Mandan Public Schools – Dr. Perry Just Testimony

3 Good morning, Chairman Beard and members of the Senate Education Committee. For the record,
4 my name is Dr. Perry Just. I serve as Director of Curriculum & Instruction for Mandan Public
5 Schools. I am writing to urge you to consider changes to Senate Bill 2213.

6 While I appreciate the intent behind this legislation and support, several significant flaws create
7 unnecessary hurdles for local school districts. First, the bill places too many requirements on
8 schools concerning professional development and reporting requirements. Part of the work of all
9 districts is to identify instructional gaps and deficits within our respective schools. Then, school
10 leaders work to create plans to address these gaps through professional development and
11 curriculum. For example, in 2021, after the COVID crisis, our district identified mathematics as
12 a significant need area based on our declining scores in this content area. We developed a three-
13 year plan to provide an updated curriculum and professional development utilizing an evidence-
14 based instructional program called Mathematic at Work. Through this three-year process, we have
15 been able to go from several points below the state average in state proficiency to above the state
16 average, particularly at our [Elementary Level](#). Utilizing local resources and ESSR dollars, our
17 district spent roughly \$120,000 on professional development to drive our work to improve over
18 the last three years. As written, this bill would require my district to complete unnecessary training,
19 reporting, and review in an area we have already addressed. I would urge the committee to consider
20 providing opportunities for school districts that have already addressed their needs or are
21 performing above state average in mathematics to be allowed to forgo the professional learning
22 and particularly, the reporting requirements embedded in the bill.

23 Furthermore, language in the bill that requires ‘ALL’ teachers to receive training creates situations
24 where we spend money on professional learning that may not be needed in our local school
25 district. Within our district, we have staff members who are exceptional teachers and have already
26 gone to great lengths to improve their instruction; they may not need specific training, but we want
27 to support and increase skills for our teachers who could use additional resources and support. This
28 bill ‘requires’ us to provide training for all and again doesn’t give local school districts the ability

29 to be conscientious of where their need is and the ability to expend funds in such a way that
30 provides impact where it is needed. Instead, we are required to put our people through unnecessary
31 training in order to satisfy a reporting requirement.

32 Additionally, sections 2 and 3 of the bill appear redundant in relation to other requirements
33 embedded in the state century code. Districts already are required to ensure that teachers are highly
34 qualified to teach in their respective areas. Providing additional requirements in an area where
35 extreme shortages already exist does not help school districts in adequately staffing their schools.
36 Furthermore, the foundation skills and competencies identified in the bill are already explicitly
37 identified within our state standards, and school districts are held accountable for meeting state
38 standards through the state assessment process. Again, under our current laws, local schools
39 identify their needs based on state assessment data and work to create their professional learning
40 and curricular gaps to improve student learning as this is a requirement as part of our continuous
41 improvement process. There is no need to create additional language for requirements that already
42 exist in our century code.

43 In conclusion, as a former mathematics teacher for many years, I applaud the legislature seeking
44 to improve student learning in mathematics. In my current roll, the bill presents several challenges
45 that could hinder its potential effect on student performance as it erodes schools' ability to
46 determine and address their current needs and develop their own programming because it places
47 unnecessary burdens on school that have already begun this work in mathematics. I urge the
48 committee to consider changes to the bill and address these concerns to ensure that it benefits our
49 students and educators by providing districts direct access to resources and the ability to tailor
50 continuous improvement planning to meet the local needs without the additional burden of
51 cumbersome and unnecessary state reporting and professional development.