

Senator Beard and members of the committee:

I will be speaking on behalf of New Salem-Almont Schools and Small Schools Association in support of SB2234 as well as concerns regarding the **Choice Ready Grant Bill SB2234**. On the surface, this is a great bill for our students, however the recent changes to the requirements for the Choice Ready Grant, particularly with the late roll-out of these changes in August 2024 created significant challenges for schools, including the scope of eligibility and impact on budgets. We are not sure if this is a legislative issue but want to bring up our concerns.

The primary concerns are as follows:

1. **Impact on Eligibility**

Schools often build schedules to ensure a logical progression for students between semesters. For example, a 10th-grade student enrolled in an online course during the first semester typically continues with another online course in the second semester. Under the new 2024-2025 grant requirements, these students are now ineligible since their online course enrollment began in the fall of 2024, and the requirements are for new students in the spring 2025 and/or summer 2025.

2. **Dual Credit Course Exemptions**

All of our students who take a dual credit course, start in the fall semester. Under the latest requirements, this excludes them from grant eligibility, as the grant now applies only to students beginning dual credit courses in spring or summer 2025. This is a significant departure from the previous years.

3. **Limitations of Online Course Vendors**

We have also noticed that C.D.E. is the only online vendor recognized under the grant. This poses a challenge for schools like ours, where some students pursuing the N.D. Scholarship need additional C.T.E. coursework. C.R.A.C.T., which offers a hands-on component, has proven to be a more suitable option for some students in these cases. Expanding vendor options to include C.R.A.C.T. and similar providers would better align with the diverse needs of schools across North Dakota.

**Recommendations**

To better support schools and ensure the grant is accessible and impactful, we respectfully request the following considerations:

- Add language in the bill to include fall semester activities for new students.
- Expand the list of approved vendors to include all in-state vendors.

This bill is designed to benefit students; however, without modifications to the current requirements, it will not achieve the intended positive impact for North Dakota students that aligns with the bill's purpose.

Sincerely,

Brian Christopherson, Superintendent  
New Salem-Almont School District