

Good Morning Mr. Chair and Members of the Senate Education Committee.

My name is Amber Edelman, I'm a military wife with teaching in both Special and General Education and have also served as a School Board Executive Chair. Now, I lead as the Principal of Promontory School of Expeditionary Learning, a rural K-8 charter school in Northern Utah. Having lived in many states as both a military child and spouse, I've gained a broad perspective on education.

My charter school is located in Perry Utah, its population is 6,000. We have students attending from all over our large rural county, with many families driving 40 minutes each way to be part of our school.

At our school, education is more than textbooks and lectures—it's an experience. We take learning beyond the classroom, giving students the opportunity to apply their knowledge through hands-on exploration. By using the world as our classroom, we foster curiosity, creativity, and deeper understanding. Let me take you through a day where learning becomes an adventure. On this fieldtrip, students paddled canoes across a local reservoir, studying the CCC-built dam and its role in the Great Depression. As they paddled over to the steep embankments, they observed erosion firsthand—identifying cracks, landslides, and sediment movement—then sketched their observations. Back on shore, they completed a service project to clean the state park. The day concluded with a reflective writing assignment, deepening their understanding of history, science, and human impact on the environment. Back in the classroom, students spent weeks expanding on their experience through discussions, research, and hands-on learning.

When Promontory first opened, there were many misconceptions—some feared that a charter school in our area would be detrimental to the local rural school district. However, instead of creating division, it sparked growth and collaboration.

At first, the district was confident in the progress they were making, but the presence of a charter school challenged us both to level up. When they raised the bar, we did too, creating a cycle of continuous improvement. Now, 13 years later, this dynamic has led to even greater opportunities for students across our rural community.

At Promontory, we have a high level of achievement, and success. We have been tracking our students after they leave our school. At the local district high school, nearly 80% of the Sterling Scholars are former Promontory students. Imagine the opportunities this could create for students in North Dakota.

One of the reasons I love charter schools is the innovation we bring to education—using the world as our classroom and ensuring that funding goes directly where it matters most. In our local district, teachers receive \$100 for classroom supplies; at our school, I provide \$2,300 for supplies. The flexibility of a charter school allows us to prioritize classroom instruction, ensuring

smaller class sizes, and a classroom teacher assistant in every room. This structure makes a real difference in both teaching and learning.

Thank you, Mr Chair, and members of the committee, for your time and commitment to education. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. I urge you to consider approving charter schools in your great state of North Dakota to cultivate your Great Thinkers of the 21st century. I welcome any questions you may have.