



NORTH DAKOTA

Family Alliance LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2242

Marit Heidbreder
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action
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Dear Chairman Beard and honorable members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Marit Heidbreder and I am testifying on behalf of North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action in support of Senate Bill 2242 and respectfully request that you render a “DO PASS” on this bill.

Senate Bill 2242 creates an opportunity to study the state of higher education in North Dakota with an aim to promote efficiency, increase collaboration among state institutions, expand dual credit options for high school students, and consider developing shorter three-year bachelor degree programs. We strongly support this effort to join numerous other states in helping students reach their goalposts sooner by maximizing dual credit opportunities in high school thus likely reducing their potential college debt and diminishing the timeframe required for them to fully enter the workforce.

Dual credit is widely recognized to create a smoother transition from high school to college, increase college completion rates, and reduce college costs. These are all desired outcomes which can greatly benefit North Dakotans.

Currently in ND, if a high schooler wants to take dual credit classes, they and their parents are responsible to pay 100% of the tuition, fees, and books¹ to the credit-granting institution (albeit the cost may be slightly reduced from retail depending on the institution). On the other hand, next door in MN, since 1985 they have offered high school students the Post Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program² which provides dual credit classes through various participating public and private state colleges and universities but there is no charge to PSEO students for tuition, books, or fees³.

¹ <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/education-programs/academic-support-programs/dual-credit>

² <http://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/124d.09>

³ <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/dual/pseo>

There is clearly a night and day difference between our two states in this area. ND asks parents to be financially prepared to bear the full weight of college tuition earlier than usual if families would like their child to participate in dual credit courses, whereas MN makes it financially feasible for EVERY family with a motivated high schooler to take advantage of dual credit offerings. In fact, it is not uncommon for MN high schoolers to graduate with both their high school diploma and their two-year associate's degree simultaneously.⁴ That option moves the goalposts of a four-year degree much closer and is a very efficient use of their time! It bears mentioning that this also makes the possibility of an advanced degree more viable for students.

ND is not MN and I'm truly thankful for that, however, there are things we can glean in this area from our neighbors to the East. Is there a middle ground possible between all cost and no cost to the dual credit student's family?

The legislative study proposed in Senate Bill 2242 could consider zero-cost opportunities like Modern States program called *Freshman Year for Free*⁵ which some states and school districts have incorporated with their high school curriculum and utilizes College Level Examination Program (CLEP) credits which the NDUS system already accepts⁶ to help deliver both high-school and college credit to their students. Jefferson Pestronk, the Executive Director of Modern States, notes "The cost of U.S. higher education has increased by 180% since 1980, far outpacing income growth. There is more than \$1.7 trillion dollars in student loan debt, and even students attending public universities – long understood as affordable – borrow an average of \$32,362 to attain a bachelor's degree."⁷

North Dakota's students deserve our best efforts to identify avenues which allow them to achieve their goals efficiently and successfully so they will hopefully choose to stay in our state to join the workforce and raise their own families.

For all these reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action asks that you please render a "DO PASS" on Senate Bill 2242. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, I will gladly stand for any questions.

Marit Heidbreder
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action

⁴ <https://www.fairmontsentinel.com/news/local-news/2022/05/14/fhs-seniors-graduate-with-aa-degree/>

⁵ <https://modernstates.org/freshman-year-free/>

⁶ <https://ndus.edu/download/1518/gerta-cbe/22355/cbe-chart-2024.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.edtechdigest.com/2025/01/27/for-37-million-people-a-beacon-of-hope/>