

Senate Education Committee

Senator Beard, Chair

February 4, 2025

SB 2262

Senator Beard and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Mark Vollmer, and I am honored to serve as the Executive Director of the North Dakota K-12 Coordination Council. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today in support of Senate Bill 2262, which seeks to amend Section 15.1-01-04 of the North Dakota Century Code. This bill grants the North Dakota K-12 Coordination Council the authority to enter into contracts for educational research and provides an appropriation to support this work.

The intent of this legislation is twofold: first, to update the original language establishing the K-12 Coordination Council by explicitly granting it the authority to enter into agreements for research purposes; and second, to allocate funding necessary for the Council to engage in this vital work.

The North Dakota K-12 Coordination Council is dedicated to fostering quality educational opportunities for all students across our state. Our work is driven by a collaborative effort of 20 key stakeholders appointed by the Governor's Office, representing a broad range of expertise and perspectives. The Council has been fortunate to work alongside exceptional partners, including the Department of Public Instruction, North Dakota United, the North Dakota School Boards Association, and the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders. These organizations have provided invaluable support by assisting with research and development as their schedules and expertise permit.

However, there are instances where the Council would significantly benefit from the ability to contract with external entities to conduct in-depth research, collect and analyze data, and provide interpretation of findings. Under the current statutory language of Section 15.1-01-04, the Council does not have the authority to enter into such agreements, limiting our ability to gather comprehensive and timely research.

It is important to emphasize that granting this authority will not replace or diminish the existing collaborative research efforts with in-state partners. Whenever possible, the Council will continue to work with its established network to conduct research. SB 2262 simply enhances the Council's ability to obtain specialized research when needed, ensuring committee recommendations are informed by high-quality, data-driven insights.

If this bill is approved, any decision to engage with a third-party research organization would require approval by the full Council. No individual member or sub-committee would have the authority to enter into agreements independently, ensuring accountability and transparency in the process.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your support for SB 2262. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration.