

Senate Education Committee,

February 10, 2025

I respectfully submit my testimony in support of Senate Bill 2362, which would allow the North Dakota State Superintendent to provide schools with accreditation options. I believe this flexibility is in the best interest of our students.

The current Cognia model has served our state well, but many schools implement school improvement models that better align with their specific needs. Dickinson Public Schools, for example, utilizes the High Reliability Schools (HRS) model developed by Robert Marzano.

Since 2020, the HRS model has been an integral part of our district's strategic plan. To meet Cognia's accreditation requirements, we currently use an HRS-Cognia crosswalk—a process that is both time-consuming and resource-intensive, requiring us to duplicate efforts unnecessarily.

Having participated in seven Cognia reviews as both an educator and a review team member, I recognize the value Cognia provides to many districts. However, allowing schools the flexibility to use a more applicable accreditation model that best supports their improvement efforts would be a significant benefit.

It should be noted as I read opposition to this bill that the accreditation process would not change the school accountability model adopted under ESSA. We would still be required to assess and survey those items outlined in the state's ESSA plan. This change would simply allow schools to use more rigorous and applicable school improvement models.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 2362 and give schools the ability to utilize an accreditation process that best serves their students and communities.

Dr. Marcus Lewton  
Superintendent  
Dickinson Public Schools