



North Dakota Senate

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COMMITTEES:
Appropriations

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Good afternoon, Chairman Beard and Senate Education Committee, for the record, I am Senator Don Schaible, here to introduce SB

This bill amends 15.1-02-11 of the North Dakota Century Code, which pertains to the accreditation of schools in North Dakota. This legislation is crucial to ensuring our schools have the flexibility to pursue accreditation models that align with their unique instructional goals, operational needs, and community needs and desires, ultimately enhancing student achievement and school performance while also limiting or eliminating unnecessary duplication.

North Dakota's schools are committed to continuous improvement and innovation. Many districts, such as Dickinson, Bismarck, Hope-Page, and Hillsboro, among others, have already adopted or are in the process of achieving certification as High-Reliability Schools (HRS) as an excellent example of another continuous improvement model. The HRS model, based on four decades of educational research, provides a structured framework for school improvement through five progressive levels of reliability. This evidence-based approach ensures that students are equipped with the necessary content and skills to graduate ready for their future endeavors.

The proposed bill before you seek to expand accreditation options by allowing schools to choose from a state-defined accreditation process or nationally recognized school improvement models, such as HRS. By doing so, schools will no longer be confined to a one-size-fits-all model that often reduces accreditation to a mere compliance exercise. Instead, they will have the opportunity to engage in meaningful, research-backed frameworks that drive real, measurable progress.

Districts like Northern Cass have demonstrated the power of HRS in transforming their educational approach. Their experience has shown that HRS provides actionable indicators, meaningful resources, and a strategic alignment that fosters continuous improvement at every level. During their last Cognia accreditation visit, they used all their HRS documentation as their evidence for Cognia accreditation. Northern Cass was recognized with distinction by leveraging their HRS work, proving the framework's effectiveness and alignment with their strategic goals.

This bill will ensure that each accreditation option meets or exceeds state standards, aligns with North Dakota's educational goals, and provides measurable outcomes for student achievement. Furthermore,

it will grant schools autonomy to select an accreditation pathway that best aligns with their vision for student success, subject to approval by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Schools such as Northern Cass, Hillsboro, Bismarck, and others have been asking for an option for quite some time and this bill provides them with this option, which for their districts, might be a vastly better option and method of continuous school improvement.

North Dakota has a strong track record of fostering educational innovation through past legislation and to continue that approach with SB 2362. By passing this bill, we continue that tradition, empowering our schools to move beyond compliance and truly engage in practices that improve learning outcomes for all students.

I urge your support in passing this legislation to provide our schools with the flexibility and tools they need to thrive in an ever-evolving educational landscape. Chairman Beard, that concludes my testimony and I would try to answer your questions.