



Testimony in Support of HB1013 Funding for National Board Certification

Appropriations Committee

January 13, 2021; 8:30 AM

Dear Chairman Monson and members of the Education Appropriations Committee.

My name is Mary Eldredge Sandbo, and I am a High School Biology Teacher at Des Lacs-Burlington High School. I have been a National Board Certified teacher since 2004. I am writing this testimony to request an increase in the current funding for National Board Certified teachers for the next biennium.

National Board Certification is the most respected professional certification available in education and provides numerous benefits to teachers, students, and schools. National Board Certification was designed to develop, retain, and recognize accomplished teachers and generate ongoing improvement in schools. National Board Certification elevates the teaching profession.

I have taught for over 30 years. During these years, I have taken on many challenges to improve my content knowledge and teaching skills. In addition to National Board Certification and renewal, I have a master's degree in science education and a doctorate in teacher leadership. I am proud of each of these accomplishments and consider them to be equal in rigor. National Board Certification is unique because of its laser-focus on teacher practice and student learning. It also leads to endless opportunities for professional growth and improved teaching effectiveness.

I pursued this certification because I wanted to know if I could provide evidence that I met the standards set forth by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Over the year that I worked to put that evidence in place, I followed the certification guidelines, and I worked with other National Board Certified Teachers and candidates to examine my teaching practice with

scrutiny, honesty, and enthusiasm. Until I worked on National Board Certification, I had never examined my practice with such a high level of consistency to ensure that my planning, lesson implementation, and professional learning positively impacts student learning. As I worked through the process, I had humbling realizations that some of the things I was doing were not effective. I also had rewarding experiences when I could connect some of my practices to positive outcomes.

By the time I completed the process, I had a new pride in being a teacher and a stronger commitment to the teaching profession. When I learned that my certification submission had passed the review of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, I was relieved and inspired. That inspiration has been a positive and driving force that has compelled me to continue to learn and grow in my teaching effectiveness. In 2014, I pursued certification renewal because I could not imagine being a teacher without this certification and the support that it provides.

In addition to my personal growth as a teacher, National Board Certification has opened doors for me as a teacher leader that have allowed me to contribute to educational endeavors in North Dakota and beyond. I have served on a variety of boards and committees at the state and local level. I have also used the skills and understanding I gained during the certification process to plan and implement professional development opportunities at the local, state, and national levels. In gatherings with teachers from around the nation, I am proud to share that I am National Board Certified. I am also proud to explain that my state provides financial support for teachers to gain certification.

Teachers are life-long learners, and National Board Certification is a challenging and positive opportunity for teachers seeking a profound learning experience. It has been the most powerful and positive process I have experienced to understand my teaching strengths, weaknesses, and pathways for growth. National Board Certification is not simply a certification. It is an opportunity

that leads to continued learning, collegiality, and professional pride. Most importantly, the certification process recognizes, supports, and validates teachers who can provide clear and convincing evidence about their effectiveness. This recognition usually goes hand-in-hand with effective professional learning. It also allows teachers to support each other and share information and practices to provide the very best education for students in our state.

North Dakota is known for its dedicated, effective teachers. It is my sincere hope that more teachers will have the same opportunity I did to work through this process. The experience of working toward and achieving National Board Certification will benefit teachers seeking a professional challenge and validation. In turn, these teachers will positively impact their colleagues and students in and beyond their classrooms.

I regret that I was not able to testify in person. I did not want to miss my classes at Des Lacs-Burlington High School. I am happy to answer any questions by email or phone call. Thank you for taking the time to review my testimony.

Sincerely,



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