

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1114
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

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**By: Jim Upgren, Assistant Director, Office of School Approval and Opportunity
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North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jim Upgren, Assistant Director in the Office of School Approval and Opportunity with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here to speak on behalf of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction in favor of HB 1114.

It has been an unprecedented time in education this year. The crisis of teacher shortages has been plaguing our state and our nation for over a decade. The unprecedented year we have had in education this year has exacerbated the problem. Our teachers have had to provide an education in multiple different formats – in person, distance and hybrid – while managing the effects of a pandemic at the same time. This bill provides the additional support our new teachers need and deserve.

NDDPI supports that the high-quality, research proven mentoring program provided by the North Dakota Teacher Support System continue. As the data from the program indicates, teacher mentoring is vital to help beginning teachers work to the best of their potential, increase job satisfaction, and increase the chances of keeping good teachers in the field. Having a mentor specifically assigned from outside of the school is an effective way to give teacher feedback from an outside

perspective. It also gives the teacher the chance to ask questions and discuss how things are going with someone that they know is not giving them a formal job performance evaluation. In addition, sometimes a teacher may feel uncomfortable talking to fellow teachers in their building about things they feel they are struggling with for fear of feeling vulnerable. It's also nice to have a mentor that is specifically assigned to the teacher, knowing that during that time the mentor has no other commitments other than working with that teacher. The North Dakota Teacher Support System is a program rooted in research and a continuous improvement process. Throughout the past decade the outcomes of the program are clear. Teachers that participate in the North Dakota Teacher Support System provided through ESPB stay in the teaching field longer and they are more effective in their profession. Our children deserve nothing less than to have an abundance of high-quality teachers in their schools. This program supports that.

Extending the mentoring program into a teacher's second year provides a valuable opportunity for the teacher to continue to grow, reflect on, and improve upon what they learned the year before. In a teacher's second year, he/she has the opportunity to improve upon various lessons, class projects and activities from the year before, and having the first year to compare improvements to is extremely valuable. Having a mentor for a second year will provide important opportunities for continued discussion and feedback and encourage self-reflection to continue.

Chairman Owens and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony and I will stand for any questions that you may have.