

Beulah Public Schools
Mr. Travis Jordan – District Superintendent

1 Date: Tuesday, March 9, 2021, 2:30PM
2 To: North Dakota House Education Committee
3 From: Travis Jordan, District Superintendent, Beulah Public Schools
4 Re: Support for SB 2196

5 Good Morning Chairman Owens and members of the House Education Committee. I am Travis
6 Jordan, District Superintendent at Beulah Public Schools. Today I speak to you in support of SB
7 2196.

8 For years now, you've likely heard talk about personalizing education; individualizing instruction to
9 meet the unique learning needs of each of our learners. It's certainly refreshing to hear, but have we
10 actually truly seen it? We talk about it all throughout a learner's school career, but at the end of the
11 day, when they walk across the stage to graduate – all learners must fit into the same box for a
12 diploma. All learners must have met the same criteria to indeed graduate. I don't call that
13 personalization. The bill before you gives our school districts the ability to truly personalize a
14 pathway to graduation that meets the unique learning needs and desires of our learners, all the while
15 ensuring mastering of necessary content skills.

16 Just a few years back in 2018 I was afforded the opportunity to attend the National Forum on
17 Education in Washington, DC where I heard a presentation that will stick with me forever. Gallup
18 Education had surveyed businesses and industries throughout our nation and found that just 11% of
19 them indicated our learners coming from high schools, colleges, and universities were ready for the
20 jobs they were hired for. This means 89% of our businesses and industries thought otherwise.

21 Up until this past summer, I would venture to say that the education community and the world of
22 work have never truly come together to discuss what skills are necessary for our learners to be
23 successful as they venture out after high school and post-secondary schooling. That indeed
24 happened this summer however, at which time the groundwork was laid for this particular bill.

25 My colleagues will touch more on what a competency-based system of education looks like (and I
26 can certainly answer questions to that as well), but I'd like to talk more on what you don't actually
27 see with your eyes or likely process in your mind as you read this bill and hear other testimony.

28 Since a dark day in the Fall of 2010 when a student of mine decided to take her own life – my
29 thoughts on how we educate students changed. I missed an opportunity to help this person just
30 hours before she decided she couldn't face the world anymore. It was in the moments and days
31 after that I realized education has to be different. We cannot just simply educate the mind without

Beulah Public Schools
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32 educating the heart. Quite honestly, educating the heart first provides for a nourished mind that is
33 ripe for learning.

34 You might ask, how does one educate the heart. It's quite simple – give every single child the one
35 thing they need to be successful – connection. When a child is connected to someone or something
36 it gives them purpose. Purpose then turns to passion and with passion one has the ability to change
37 the world.

38 How does that tie into this bill? We must allow our learners to engage in real and relevant
39 curriculum that they are interested in and passionate about. All too often in education we cast our
40 curriculum (like one would cast a net to catch fish) over our learners and they get trapped. We must
41 allow our learners to swim outside of the net. Instead of throwing our curriculum out and hoping it
42 sticks with our learners, lets allow our learners to wrap their passions around the curriculum or better
43 yet let's allow them to help create it. Too many of our learners feel like they are trapped in the net.
44 They are limited and confined in a learning space that doesn't allow them to truly grow and follow
45 their passions. Let's bring the world of work in and marriage their needs with the passions and
46 interests of our learners. We simply cannot expect to grow living in silos.

47 When we allow our businesses and industries to partner with our schools to provide real and
48 relevant learning opportunities, we not only grow our learners, we grow the world of work as well.

49 One bill, SB 2196 has the power to enrich our learners like we have never done before. It has the
50 power to curb the mental health crisis that continues to grow at a faster and faster rate across the
51 world, as it connects learner interest and passion with real and relevant work. It has the ability for
52 small town and large town North Dakota to grow their cities by providing work opportunities for our
53 learners. Subsequently, we will begin to close the gap that exists between what the world of work
54 needs and what schools are producing. And finally, it allows our learners to swim outside of the net
55 to find endless possibilities to connect their passion to their future positions in a world that is thirsting
56 for that right now.

57 Thank you, Chairman Owens and members of the committee, for allowing me to share my passion
58 with you here today. I'll yield to any questions you may have.

59 Travis Jordan, District Superintendent, Beulah Public Schools.