

1                                   **Testimony on Senate Bill No. 2215**

2                                   **Presented to the Senate Education Committee**

3                                   **Dr. Robert Lech, Superintendent, Jamestown Public School District #1**

4                                   **February 2, 2021**

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6                   Good morning Chairman Schaible and members of the Senate Education Committee.

7   For the record, my name is Robert Lech and I serve as the superintendent of the Jamestown  
8   School District. I am providing testimony in support of Senate Bill 2215.

9                   As a school district superintendent, I am tasked with being a resource for both  
10   negotiating units and school boards throughout the negotiations process. As such, I feel it is my  
11   role to consider the impacts of negotiations on all sides. It is important to me that both the  
12   negotiating units and the school boards are treated equitably to ensure that good faith  
13   negotiations can take place.

14                  I appreciate that the bill sponsors specify the formation of the negotiating unit to be no  
15   later than February first of the negotiating year and the corresponding petition filing no later  
16   than March first. As noted in NDCC 15.1-16-13, this would mean that negotiations must start  
17   no later than thirty days after recognition of the negotiating unit. This should provide ample  
18   time for negotiating units and school boards to discuss the topics pertinent to negotiations and  
19   reach consensus prior to the deadline of June 1. While both sides would need to grow more  
20   accustomed to this new timeline, I believe it is ultimately to the benefit of both negotiating  
21   units and school boards.

22                  It is important to note that good-faith negotiations continue to be clearly defined in  
23   NDCC 15.1-16-13. There remains the necessity to meet at reasonable times and negotiate in

24 good-faith. This bill provides the opportunity for both sides to agree to start negotiations later  
25 and to extend beyond the deadline if both agree to do so. In the event that there is not an  
26 agreement on extending negotiations, the impasse process, or possibly mediation, continues to  
27 be in place to help both sides reach that common ground necessary to complete good-faith  
28 negotiations.

29 I contend that stakeholders are better cared for, if an agreement can be reached or if  
30 the good-faith negotiations are complete and contracts can be issued prior to the beginning of  
31 the next school year. Teachers and administrators will be offered a contract, school districts  
32 will have a better understanding of personnel needs and, more importantly, will have the time  
33 to adequately fill any vacancies, and the students and families will know their teachers and  
34 administrators.

35 I ask that you support the process to provide a more expeditious pathway for the  
36 completion of negotiations in a fair and reasonable timeframe through a Do Pass  
37 Recommendation on Senate Bill 2215. Thank you for the time today and I would stand  
38 available for any questions you may have. I am also available through email at

39 [Robert.Lech@k12.nd.us](mailto:Robert.Lech@k12.nd.us).