



North Dakota Small Organized Schools

Mr. Michael Heilman
Executive Director
3144 Hampton Street
Bismarck, ND 58504
mheilmanndsos@gmail.com
701-527-4621

Mr. Brandt Dick
President
PO Box 100 – 123 Summit Street
Underwood, ND 5857
Brandt.Dick@underwoodschool.org
701-442-3274

Mr. Steven Heim
Vice-President
PO Box 256
Drake, ND 58736
Steve.heim@k12.nd.us
701-465-3732

HB 1337 – Related to allowing school districts transferring of real property and funds

Testimony in support

Michael Heilman – Executive Director North Dakota Small Organized School

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Chairman Dockter and members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee, my name is Michael Heilman. I am the Executive Director of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools (NDSOS). I represent 154-member school districts of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools. NDSOS stands in support of HB 1337.

As you have heard or will hear, we have several small communities across the state whose schools are dealing with declining enrollments. Unfortunately, this is not new to the landscape of North Dakota and rural schools. Many of these schools are known in the funding formula as transition minimum schools. Transition minimum schools were held harmless to a funding amount within the current funding formula enacted during the 2013 session. Along with declining enrollment many of the schools will see a decrease in funding as the transition minimum dollars are reduced over time. Some will continue to operate if they have adequate student numbers, other will have to make the difficult decision about closing and dissolution.

This bill provides communities with an option to maintain a structure that served generations of students for a useful purpose. Allowing the school district to work with another political subdivisions to preserve the school as a community center, senior center, or other community use seems like a win for our rural communities. Rather than allowing these structures to fall into ruin, this bill gives communities a viable option to maintain and continue to use a structure that served them well and can continue to do so in a different manner. NDSOS supports of HB 1337.

Thank you Chairman Dockter and member of the House Political Subdivisions Committee. I would stand for any questions.

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The mission of NDSOS is to provide leadership for the small/rural schools in North Dakota and to support legislation favorable to their philosophy while opposing legislation that is harmful.