

67th Legislative Assembly – Senate Appropriations – SB 2257

Good morning Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. My name is Kristin Knorr and I am the Network Lead for the North Dakota Afterschool Network. I am testifying in favor of Senate Bill 2257.

The ND Afterschool Network is a statewide initiative of the South East Education Cooperative and we work to increase access to high-quality afterschool and summer learning opportunities for students K-12 across the state. We equip programs with the tools and support to expand program quality, build leadership capacity, and ensure access to afterschool programs for all youth in their community.

Nearly 18,000 students K-12 participate in afterschool programming across ND. However, **for every student served, two more would participate if a program were available to them.** There are now 37,532 school-age children (38%) in North Dakota who would be enrolled in an afterschool program if one were available to them. In the last decade, the number of children unable to access afterschool programs in ND has grown by nearly 14,000 students. The top challenges parents report to enrolling their child in a program include the lack of an available program in their community, being unable to afford programming, or there is no safe transportation to and from the program.

Afterschool programs include any program offered to K-12 students outside of the school day that has regularly scheduled enrichment or academic activities. Programs can take place in a school building, community-based settings, summer camps, parks and recreation facilities, and other locations, and can be offered before school, after school, summers, weekends, and during school breaks.

High-quality afterschool programming helps develop skills, provides opportunities for growth and support, and provides a safe environment for the kids attending the program.

Kids in afterschool enjoy a wide range of benefits, including:

- Interacting with peers and building social skills
- Getting help with homework
- Taking part in physical activities and receiving healthy snacks or meals
- Building 21st century skills
- Engaging in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) learning

Afterschool also helps working families. ND has the fifth largest percentage of dual parent working families, with 76% of school-age children having both parents in the workforce. The America After 3pm survey found that 81% of North Dakota parents with a child in an afterschool program say that program helps them keep their job and 88% say afterschool programs give them peace of mind while they are at work.

Currently, there is no state funding for afterschool programs. School districts that do not qualify for federally funded 21st century community learning center grants by having 40% of students eligible for free or reduced priced meals are left with limited options to fund an afterschool program.

In closing, I want to thank you for your time and consideration of SB 2257, which could help more than 3,000 more students have access to an afterschool program. A state grant program would help close the gap and allow additional educational opportunities for students alone and unsupervised after school and when school is otherwise not in session. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.