



NORTH DAKOTA SENATE

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SB 2147 – Optional GED Testing for Grad Requirements

Hearing scheduled: January 19, 2021 | 9:30 am

Senate Education Committee, Sen. Schaible, Chair

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, for the record, I'm Erin Oban, senator for Bismarck's District 35. I'm here to introduce SB 2147, one of many bills we'll be debating this session to create additional options and support alternative pathways to achieve the same end goal of having our North Dakota students meet our state's requirements and be choice ready to graduate from high school.

As you likely know, [the GED test](#) is a series of four subject tests – English, math, science, and social studies – a person over the age of 16 can take to demonstrate their high school academic knowledge. Earning a GED diploma is already equivalent to earning a high school diploma. SB 2147 proposes *optional* – NOT MANDATORY – language, should a school district choose to approve it, giving the ability for students to demonstrate their knowledge and achieve credit in any of those four GED portions by passing that relevant portion of the GED test.

As the bill is written, school districts would have the both the choice to use this option in their school(s) as well as the authority to dictate their own programmatic requirements and customize it to their own students. NDDPI offers technical assistance in many, many areas, and this would be no different should a school district need or wish for guidance.

We know that not all students are the same. Their skills and abilities, their interest and commitment, their experiences and situations both in and out of the school walls influence students' likelihood of finding success in the traditional classroom environment. More and more, education is being asked and responding to the fact that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work to meet the varying and diverse needs of our learners. Making this option available would be especially beneficial for those students who aren't likely to be labeled as the "high fliers." Maybe they've fallen significantly behind in one of their courses, or maybe they're considering or already at risk of dropping out. This bill, if passed, would provide a way to keep those students in school and continue pursuing their high school diploma rather than a state-issued GED, give them far greater continued educational supports, equity, and access than they would get if they dropped out, even if they later chose to enroll in an adult ed program, and leaves the funding stream to the school in place as the students would still be enrolled and counted in the Average Daily Membership (ADM) used in the funding formula.

The fact is, some districts, school leaders, and educators will bend over backwards to try to meet the needs of ALL their students, including and especially those who are most struggling, but they're limited to the tools we give them in law. Based on conversations I've had with schools and with NDDPI, I know that there are already individual administrators who want this option for some of their students. SB 2147 would be just another tool for them to work with. In fact, we may even want to consider adding an emergency clause on to the bill.

Mr. Chairman, admittedly, I don't know all there is to know about the GED itself, but I have worked extensively with Mr. Stan Schauer at NDDPI on this and several other workforce preparation and adult education issues. He knows these programs inside and out, and I hope this committee will have the opportunity to hear from him and address specific questions directly to him (where I will undoubtedly refer many of them anyway).

Thank you, and I'd appreciate your favorable consideration of SB 2147.