

Good morning Chairman Schaible and members of the committee. My name is Jenifer Hosman and I am the K-12 principal at Hebron Public School in Hebron, North Dakota. We have 156 students in our school, 68 of those being high school students. I would like to share a few thoughts this morning from the small-town school point of view regarding senate bill 2147. A great thing about working and living in a small town is that I know every single one of my students and most of their families on a deeper level than I would at a larger school. It's not better or worse, but it is just the way it is.

I am 100% behind helping my students get to the finish line and earn their high school diploma. At my school we do whatever we can to help our students get to the final goal of walking across the stage to receive their diploma. Most often this occurs by students following a path that is prepared for them so that they earn each credit that is required to make it to graduation day. Sometimes there's a hiccup or two along the way and we react with the many supports that are available to us. I can arrange schedules for students to be able to retake a course, take a course over summer school, take a credit recovery course through North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE) or on ITV through Great Western Network. We have had great success using these supports to help our students earn their credits. It's not always easy and we have to think outside of the box but most times we are able to help them reach that goal.

Sometimes circumstances present when it is necessary to discuss other options. It is our goal to help this small percentage of students find success in other ways. Job Corp in Minot and the Dickinson Adult Learning Center are two other options that we utilized to help students succeed. Reading directly from the Job Corp website we understand that Job Corps is a no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 to 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training. Job Corp also offers a GED program that can occur while students are learning a trade. The Dickinson Adult Learning Center is the GED center nearest to my high school. I have worked with them on a few occasions when a student has needed to get their GED rather than completing high school for their diploma. They have been very good in meeting with students to help them and their parents understand their options and guide them in decision making.

Sadly, every so often, once in the last four year's to be specific, a student drops out of my high school. This happens for many reasons but it doesn't occur before all of the above-mentioned options are discussed and it is completely out of my control.

Recently I was made aware of SB2147 and in theory it sounds like another great option. I feel that in a very unique and specific instance within the parameters of the alternate high school diploma this could be an option for an individual. I would not be opposed to a more specific and individualized option that could mean the difference between obtaining a diploma and not. If for example a student was one course away and could show competency via this route, I could support that.

There are many concerns surrounding offering the option of the GED test for high school credit in order to receive a high school diploma. Taking a test on one day to show mastery is not anywhere near the same as prolonged and repeated exposure to content to cement learning.

Rather than submitting my own personal thoughts alone, I discussed this bill with my English, Math, Science, and Social Studies teachers. Here are a few of their comments.

Teacher #1 This is unfair to the colleges and jobs the student applies to because the job is under the assumption that the student has met the same requirements as all high school students. A student should not receive a high school diploma when they did not do the work. They should receive a GED since that is the work that they did do. All opportunities after high school recognize the difference between the two and it is not fair to employers because they will higher under qualified employees for their job.

Teacher #2 I teach my classes so students can retain the information and think to question the world around them once they have graduated from school. Taking a test to fulfill what I try to accomplish in my classroom simply does not make students lifelong learners.

Teacher #3 My concern would be lack of social skills needed to survive in the real world. Studies show there is a 4% increase in unemployment rates for people with GED, I believe this comes from the lack of social skills and learning to how to

deal with everyday life problems, instead of just taking a test. Also, if you look at some military and college requirements, students with GED are less likely to be accepted into the military, along with colleges.

If this bill were to pass in its current form, some additional concerns that would need to be addressed include figuring student GPA, class rank, and qualifying for the ND academic and CTE scholarship. The high school diploma is a very big deal. It is something that is worked for and earned by our students. The credibility of this honor would be diminished if students were allowed to “test out” of course work.

There is no doubt that the GED program is a program that is also a success for those that choose that path. Joining the two doesn't seem like a good fit in the current draft of the bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our thoughts on the matter.