

Mandan Public School District
Mr. Jeff Fastnacht, Assistant Superintendent

1 Date: Wednesday, February 3, 2021
2 To: North Dakota Senate Education Committee
3 From: Jeff Fastnacht, Asst. Superintendent
4 Re: Support for SB 2289

5 Good Morning Chairman Schaible, Vice-Chair Elkin and members of the committee. I am Jeff
6 Fastnacht, Asst. Superintendent at Mandan Public School. I am in support for SB 2289 today and ask that
7 the committee provide it a DO PASS recommendation.

8 For those of you that do not know me, I have the opportunity to be a member of the ESSA
9 Implementation Team for North Dakota. I have been an active member of this team of outstanding
10 educators and leaders since the spring of 2016. One of my passions, that I brought to the committee was
11 my desire to create a new accountability system that included elements of Redefining Ready. Redefining
12 Ready was, and is a national movement, supported by the American Association of School Administrators
13 to change how school accountability was measured. Redefining Ready was developed in response to the
14 one-test fits all philosophy so prevalent during NCLB. I had the privilege of working on a national level as
15 a member of the Redefining Ready Implementation Cohort in 2015-2016. It was our goal to guide states
16 to develop ESSA plans that incorporated all or part of the Redefining Ready program. North Dakota did
17 just that when we developed our ESSA plan.

18 North Dakota's Choice Ready was initially focused on a means of measuring the success of high
19 schools in our state within the ESSA accountability system. It did not take long to realize that in addition
20 to being a more accurate representation of our schools, that Choice Ready was also a valuable tool to
21 guide students on their desired post-secondary path. Choice Ready provides a guide for students as to
22 what matters in high school as they prepare for post-secondary, the world of work, the military, or maybe
23 even all three. Students are deemed Choice Ready when they successfully complete the Essential Skills
24 and two of the other subcategories mentioned previously. The North Dakota Choice Ready Framework
25 has developed into a system that informs students, and their families, about the aptitudes and skills that
26 help ensure their children will be successful in the future.

27 SB 2289 and the alignment of our state's scholarships to the Choice Ready framework reinforces the
28 benefits of Choice Ready and how academics and skills are what are desired for our children. Students
29 around our state, just as they are in Mandan High School, are being guided by school counselors,
30 administrators, and educators to strive to graduate Choice Ready. Graduating high school is wonderful.
31 However, graduating and being deemed Choice Ready affirms to our students and their families that they
32 have the skills to be successful in areas well outside of the academics. Connecting the state scholarship
33 to this process will further advance the importance of being Choice Ready to our children.