

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1305  
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**January 24, 2023**

**By: Jim Upgren, Assistant Director of School Approval and Opportunity**

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**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**

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Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jim Upgren, Assistant Director in the Office of School Approval and Opportunity with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here on behalf of the department to speak in support of HB 1305.

The Academic and Career and Technical Education (CTE) Scholarships were created in 2009. This is a \$6000 college scholarship awarded to students based on requirements met while in high school. Any student that meets all the requirements of one of the scholarships gets a scholarship, regardless of how many students that is. These original requirements were based primarily on being college-ready. In a typical year, that number is usually a little over 1800 students from each graduating class.

In 2021, the 67<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly passed SB 2289 creating the new North Dakota Scholarship, which will eventually replace the Academic and CTE Scholarships. The new North Dakota Scholarship requirements are aligned to the requirements for a student to be considered “Choice Ready”, but contain higher rigor than what is required to graduate Choice Ready. In other words, all students who qualify for the scholarship under the new requirements will also graduate Choice

Ready, but not all students who graduate Choice Ready will qualify for the scholarship.

The timeline for students earning the scholarship is as follows: students graduating in 2023 or 2024 can use either the current Academic and CTE scholarship requirements or the new North Dakota Scholarship requirements. Starting with the graduating class of 2025, all students would be evaluated for the scholarship using the new requirements. The Class of 2025 was chosen as the first class to exclusively use the new scholarship requirements because they were the oldest class that had not yet started high school at the time that SB 2289 was passed.

A Choice Ready student is one who is qualified to pursue the choice of more than one path after high school. The same concept applies to the new North Dakota Scholarship requirements. I have included with my electronic testimony a copy of the North Dakota Scholarship chart for your reference. Students must meet 4 of the 8 Essential Skills at the top of the chart (in yellow). At the bottom of the chart are three pathways: Post-Secondary Ready ( on the left side of the chart in orange), Workforce Ready ( in the middle of the chart in blue), and Military Ready ( on the right side of the chart in purple). Students who have a 3.0 grade-point-average and have met the Essentials Skills section at the top of the chart, and then meet the requirements of 2 of the 3 pathways at the bottom of the chart qualify for the new North Dakota Scholarship.

We created the North Dakota Scholarship chart after SB 2289 passed last session, as we knew this would be the best way to illustrate the scholarship requirements for schools, students, and parents. I will talk about where the various components of the chart are located in the bill. The Essential Skills section at the top of the chart in yellow is covered in subsections 1 thru 5, (located from page 1 line 10 thru page 2 line 8). Subsection 6 covers each of the three pathways at the bottom of the chart. Subdivision a (starting on page 2, line 11) describes the Post-Secondary Ready pathway in orange. Subdivision b (starting on page 3, line 1) describes the Workforce Ready pathway in blue. And subdivision c (starting on page 4, line 4) describes the Military Ready pathway in purple.

As I mentioned earlier, students need to meet the requirements of two of the three pathways at the bottom of the chart (plus the essential skills on the top) to qualify for the scholarship. For example, if a student does not receive a 24 on the ACT, they are automatically eliminated from meeting the Post-Secondary Ready pathway. That would mean that, for students that do not score a 24 or higher on the ACT, their only option would be to pursue the Workforce Ready and Military Ready pathways. Shortly after the 67<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly adjourned, I began to receive feedback from schools that the ASVAB score requirement of 85 was too high. Feedback from schools suggested that a required score of 85 on the ASVAB would effectively eliminate any student that did not get a 24 on the ACT from having a

chance at the scholarship, since those students were also not likely to score an 85 or higher on the ASVAB. For the current CTE Scholarship, students can meet the testing requirement by scoring either a 24 on the ACT or receiving a WorkKeys score of 5 or higher ( out of a possible score of 7). Each year, around 700 students ( of the roughly 1800 students that I mentioned earlier) qualify for the CTE Scholarship by passing the WorkKeys, meaning that once these requirements become the only option in 2025, these students will not qualify for the scholarship unless they score an 85 on the ASVAB.

During the 2021-2022 school year, I asked schools to submit data regarding the number of students who earned the CTE Scholarship in 2021 by passing the WorkKeys. I also asked schools to submit information regarding how many of THOSE SAME STUDENTS scored an 85 or higher on the ASVAB. Out of a reported sample size of 416 students, only 12 students (2.8%) received a score of 85 or higher on the ASVAB. In short, that means keeping the ASVAB score at 85 would mean 700 fewer students earning the scholarship each year, and reducing the number of students receiving the scholarship was never the intention of SB 2289. I also had some conversations with the North Dakota National Guard last year regarding the ASVAB, and they recommended that a score of 50 would be more reflective of the score it would take to start in the military with a chance of getting an assignment that is a step above other new recruits. Based on that knowledge, I sent out another

request to the schools this fall, asking how a score of 50 on the ASVAB would compare to current scholarship numbers, and these numbers were much more in line with our current Academic and CTE scholarship numbers. Based on this information, I recommended to a few legislators that a 50 would be a more appropriate score, and you'll notice that page 4, line 9 of the bill reflects that amendment.

I'll talk now about other scholarship revisions that are in the bill. There were several changes made to the Choice Ready framework itself this fall, and a few of these revisions reflect those changes. Under the Post-Secondary Ready pathway, we added fine arts courses as an option for students to meet the additional indicators. Under the Workforce Ready pathway, we added foreign language courses as an alternative to the requirement to have four Career and Technical Education credits. Also under Workforce Ready, we added the option of scoring 1180 on the SAT as an alternative to scoring 24 or higher on the ACT ( this is a technical correction that we missed during the 2021 legislative session, as that option was listed for Post-Secondary Ready but not Workforce Ready). Under Military Ready, we added the option of taking 2 credits of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) or Civil Air Patrol as options for meeting additional indicators. In addition, there is currently an option for students that have completed basic training to meet the ASVAB requirement if they have an ASVAB score of 31 or higher. However, scholarship requirements must be met while the student is still in high school, and many students

complete basic training the summer after they graduate. To accommodate for that, we are adding the option to complete basic training within 90 days of graduating from high school if pursuing this option.

NDDPI fully supports HB 1305 to improve the North Dakota Scholarship. Please give this bill a “Do Pass” recommendation to align our state scholarship to goals that are meaningful for student achievement.

Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony and I will stand for any questions that you may have.