

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1494
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

January 30, 2023

By: Linda Schloer, Director of Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs

701-328-4565

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee:

My name is Linda Schloer, and I am the Director of Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here to provide information regarding HB 1494 regarding school district school meals policy.

As part of administering the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs, our office is responsible for ensuring program operators comply with federal laws and regulations. In 2017 established the requirement for schools participating in the National School Lunch and/or School Breakfast program to develop and communicate a policy for handling unpaid meal charges. USDA does not define the policy content.

The North Dakota School Board Association, in consultation with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction has developed an Unpaid Meal Charge policy template that districts can use to define and communicate their own policy. A copy of this template is included with this testimony.

The Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs office of DPI reviews the district Unpaid Meal Charge policy as part of School Nutrition Programs compliance monitoring process. The review establishes that the policy content meets federal requirements and that it has been communicated as required.

Unpaid meal charge policies provide clarity on the processes districts will take when meals are not paid for, but they don't prevent the charges from occurring. Districts put considerable effort into collecting these charges, but much of it becomes unrecoverable. Once the charges are determined by the district to be uncollectable, the district must use nonfederal funding sources such as donations or the district general fund to repay the school foodservice account for the total amount.

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