

TESTIMONY ON SB 2033
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
March 6, 2023

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In Service of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
Employed with the North Dakota University System

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ellie Shockley, and I am an institutional researcher employed by the North Dakota University System. In this role, I am contracted to support the ND Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

I write to share my research that is highly relevant to SB 2033. The loan forgiveness program as it is described in the bill uses National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale codes to establish criteria. The rural and remote town schools mentioned in SB 2033 are coded with four NCES locale codes:

1. **Town-Remote:** Territory inside an Urban Cluster that is more than 35 miles from an Urbanized Area.
2. **Rural-Fringe:** Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an Urban Cluster.
3. **Rural-Distant:** Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an Urbanized Area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an Urban Cluster.
4. **Rural-Remote:** Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an Urbanized Area and also more than 10 miles from an Urban Cluster.

There are five NCES locale codes used in North Dakota that are not included

in the list above: City–Midsize, City–Small, Suburban–Midsize, Suburban–Small, and importantly, **Town–Distant**. Following is how this locale is defined by the NCES.

Town–Distant: Territory inside an Urban Cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an Urbanized Area.

I would like to bring to your attention my research findings that North Dakota’s schools in Distant Town locales have the poorest teaching-licensed personnel retention rate in the state. I share this information because it means that the NCES locale criteria stated in the current draft of the bill excludes schools where the teacher retention crisis is most severe – Distant Town schools. On the following page, I include a graph that illustrates retention rates by school locale. As you can see, distant town schools have an 80.2% retention rate among their teaching-licensed personnel – the lowest retention rate of all locale codes.

If the aim of SB 2033 is to address the teacher retention and teacher shortage crisis where it is most severe in our state, then I invite you to consider amending SB 2033 to include “distant town” schools in the bill’s criteria, alongside the mention of “remote town” schools and the three kinds of “rural” schools. All this would require is a minor edit to line 21 on page 1 and lines 7, 10, and 16 on page 2. Such minor edits would empower the bill to address teacher attrition in a highly targeted way. Please contact me if you have any questions. Thanks for your time.

ND Teaching-Licensed Personnel Retention, '20-'21 to '21-'22

*Locales used in criteria in current SB 2033 bill language

^Distant Town locale, suggested for your consideration

- Same Workplace
- Changed Workplace In-State
- Left Field or State

