

Manvel Public School

Inspiring 21st Century Learners to Influence 22nd Century Successes



March 8, 2023

Good morning Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Dr. Dave Wheeler and I am the Superintendent for Manvel Public School district. I am here today to speak in support of SB 2340 and the amendment to section 15.1-06-19 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to required school counselors.

Manvel Public School is a district of 173 students as well as 18 Pre-K students and this fall, 5 days before we were to start with students, our full time counselor resigned and did not return to our district after September 9th. We spent the first 5 weeks of school with no counselor as we searched to fill the position. We were fortunate to be able to fill the position at .40 with a counselor who had left a nearby district to go into private practice; she is in our building 1 day a week and has been since early October.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has told Manvel Public School that based on our enrollment, we are required to have a counselor at a minimum of .59. Manvel P.S. believes in having a full time counselor but with large districts like Grand Forks and West Fargo also being as many as 5 counselors short to start this school year, our ability to hire gets even more difficult.

SB 2340 provides flexibility for school districts of all sizes to provide counseling to their students in some manner and fulfill the law as it is written today. Manvel can look to hire a variety of counseling personnel on a contract for services basis to make sure our students receive the mental and emotional services necessary to be successful each day in school.

In Sept of 2022, when our counselor left the district, Manvel Public School sent emails to NDSU and UND to let them know that we had lost our counselor and we were hopeful that there was someone looking to still fill an intern position for this school year. We knew it would be a longshot but it was our first attempt to fill the void. Not surprisingly, I never heard back from either program. In December, Manvel opened our counseling position in a full time capacity on EdJobs and also reached out one more time to both counseling programs, UND and NDSU. As of today, March 7th, we have had 1 application for our position. While I'm confident that our higher education institutions are doing their best to increase the number of students in their programs, I am also confident that small districts such as ours will continue to struggle to fill our position in the manner the state requires or that we would prefer. School districts need flexibility in hiring counseling positions right now, there are not enough to go around with the requirements as they are currently written. Please support SB 2340 and give schools and students some

flexibility in the hiring of counselors. I have no doubt UND and NDSU are doing the best they can to turn counselors out but, today, it isn't happening fast enough to support large or small school districts in North Dakota.