

Senate Education Committee
Chairman Jay Elkin
March 15, 2023

Testimony
Shane Goettle
Lobbyist for State Association of Nonpublic Schools (SANS)

HB 1491

Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Shane Goettle and I am here as the registered lobbyist for the State Association of Nonpublic Schools (SANS).

SANS fully supports the notion that a well-fed mind learns better than one that isn't, and HB 1491 takes a great step in ensuring that our children are prepared for each and every school day. It is true that during the 2020 and 2021 school years, the CARES Act provided free school lunches to all public-school students, but also to all private school students. Private schools in the state also participate in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, and every one of our schools have families that qualify for the program. Just yesterday you heard Sarah Dudley from St. Michael's school, in Grand Forks, speak on how over the past 10 years, between 17 and 23 percent of her students have been deemed at the poverty level. Additionally, within the private school system, there are mission schools that serve our Native American reservations, which is crucial to keep in mind.

We believe that this is an important policy discussion to have. If the committee decides to move forward with a do pass recommendation, we urge you to include private school students, treating private schools in the same manner that both state and federal policy have through the CARES Act and the Free and Reduced Lunch Program in general. We cannot afford to leave any child behind, and we must work towards ensuring that every student has access to the nutrition they need to succeed.

Thanks for your time today.