

Testimony Prepared for the  
**Senate Education Committee**

March 14, 2023

By: Kim Jacobson, Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director

**RE: House Bill 1494 – related to school meals**

Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Kim Jacobson. I serve as the Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director, which includes the service area of Traill and Steele Counties. In addition, I serve as the President of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. Please consider my testimony in support of HB 1494.

Human Service Zones work and engage with thousands of children and families across the state of North Dakota in delivering our critical safety net services such as child welfare services and economic assistance programs. Today, I urge support of SB 1494 which would end practices that invertedly harm children due to their parents' inability to pay for their school meals. The practices mentioned in this bill do occur in our schools on a regular basis. As child welfare professionals, we are concerned about the negative emotional and physical impact these practices have on growing and learning children.

All children need nutritious food, each day, in order to learn and grow. Child hunger is a real issue in North Dakota. Research shows that children who are hungry, do not learn as much as their peers and also have increased likelihood of distracting/disruptive behaviors. Children attend school to learn. The simple task of allowing all children to eat so they can focus on learning, while not be overtly identified if their lunch fund balance is negative, is something that our children deserve.

Thank you for considering my testimony relating to this bill.