

1 SB2284

2 Mandan Public Schools – Dr. Jeff Fastnacht, Asst. Superintendent

3 Good morning, Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate
4 Education Committee.

5 It has been my pleasure over the past five years to have served as
6 the Assistant Superintendent for Mandan Public Schools. Over
7 this same period of time I have also served our profession as a
8 statewide leader as President of the North Dakota Association of
9 School Administrators (NDASA) and North Dakota Council of
10 Educational Leaders (NDCEL). I also had the privilege to serve
11 on the State Board of Public School Education and the North
12 Dakota Board of Career and Technical Education between 2018
13 and 2022. I am speaking to you today in support of Amendment
14 1 of 2284, dealing with the composition of the State Board of
15 Public Education.

16 The State Board of Public School Education plays a vital role in
17 setting the course for education in our state. Over the past five
18 years it has expanded from a board dealing almost exclusively

1 with reorganizations and annexations, to now having a
2 supervisory role of Regional Education Associations (REAs) and
3 adopting the Learning Continuum. Within this session additional
4 duties including oversight of the Center for Distance Education
5 (CDE) are being proposed. The State Board and the Career and
6 Technical Education (CTE) Board, which are joined in law, work
7 on many detailed issues that affect our school districts. While
8 there is value in varied perspectives in making these decisions, I
9 would offer that many of these decisions require an understanding
10 of education, taxation, and governance that is inherent to the
11 experiences of a school district superintendent. Between these
12 boards this includes, but is not limited to, annexations and the
13 impact of large property transfers between districts, new courses
14 offerings and course requirements within CTC as well as the
15 recent proposal of a new funding formula. Again, I suggest that
16 the expertise of a school district superintendent and the
17 understanding of the nuance of these decisions is not just nice to
18 have, it is a necessity.

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1 North Dakota Century Code 15.1-01-01 appears to recognize the
2 valuable role of the superintendent in the State Board. In fact,
3 subsection 3 clearly states that

4 The governor shall appoint new board members from a list
5 of names submitted by a committee consisting of the
6 president of North Dakota united, the president of the North
7 Dakota council of educational leaders, and the president of
8 the North Dakota school boards association. Two of the state
9 board members must be members of the North Dakota
10 school boards association

11 What is less clear is why this process has recently been changed
12 and no longer aligns with NDCC 15.1-01-01. In 2022, Dr. Steve
13 Holen, Superintendent in McKenzie County School District, and
14 I were at the end of our terms and subject to reappointment. As
15 is required, the Governor's Office made the decision to appoint
16 new members and neither Dr. Holen or I were reappointed. For
17 the sake of clarity, it is within the Governor's responsibilities to
18 either reappoint or make a new appointee. The concern is not if
19 Dr. Holen or I were reappointed, but rather that the process
20 outlined in 15.1-01-01(3) was not followed with the fidelity that

1 should be expected with a process so clearly articulated in North
2 Dakota Century Code. In this case, no representatives were
3 offered by North Dakota United, North Dakota Council of
4 Educational Leaders or the North Dakota School Boards
5 Association. The selections were made from an application
6 process without input from the groups outlined in subsection 3.

7 This amendment is directing the representation on this critical
8 board. It replicates the requirement to have two NDSBA
9 representatives by now also requiring two NDASA
10 representatives. I feel this is a strong middle ground that still
11 allows the Governor's Office to exercise choice for two members
12 through an application process that wouldn't contradict the
13 process articulated in 15.1-01-01.

14 Chairman Elkin and members of the committee. Leadership
15 matters and leaders that work daily in our schools have a unique
16 perspective that should be represented on both of these boards.