

Testimony in Support of SB 2284 – Senate Education Committee

Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee, for the record my name is Bob Marthaller, representing North Dakota United.

Chairman Elkin, North Dakota United is pleased to provide testimony in general support of SB 2284, and we wish to thank you and Senator Schaible as well as Representative Heinert and Representative Nathe for your leadership and efforts to provide quality educational opportunity for North Dakota students. The members and leadership of North Dakota United, also want to thank you for your support and efforts to provide adequate and equitable financial resources to public schools and school districts. Your efforts have made it possible for school boards, administrators, teachers, and many other school staff to continue working to provide the best possible education system for North Dakota students. And, I must say that you have done all this while providing significant property tax relief for the citizens of North Dakota.

Chairman Elkin and members of the committee, North Dakota United believes that North Dakota teachers are among the best in the nation. Along with parental and community support and involvement, we believe our education system and quality instruction provided by North Dakota teachers, will have our students choice ready and will graduate ready to pursue additional formal education or training, enter the military, or become a part of the state workforce.

We also recognize the work is not complete and there is much left to be done. Education is a continuous process and for our students to be “choice ready” additional resources must be made available. Services such as career counseling, mental health and other counseling support, resources for critical infrastructure such as technology and safe and functional facilities must be supported and expanded.

Teachers and support staff are critical to the mission, and we must endeavor to do the best that we can to support them, including providing a competitive compensation and benefit package. To this end, the State of North Dakota must provide the financial resources in order to serve North Dakota students.

That’s why North Dakota United wishes to propose a significant increase in funding to public school districts, increases that local school boards can manage at the local level in support of education in their communities.

SB 2284, Section 8, page 11 sets the state rate at \$10,544 per weighted student units for the 2023-24 school year and \$10,860 for the 2024-25 school year.

Chairman Elkin and members of the committee, North Dakota United respectfully suggests that the rate for the 2023-24 school year be set at \$11,056 per weighted student unit and for the 2024-25 school year, the rate be set at \$11,940. With the help of the professional staff at the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, we estimate the additional cost for the

biennium to be approximately \$346 million, or about an 8% increase for each year of the biennium.

At North Dakota United we recognize this is a huge number for the Senate Education Committee to ponder. However, North Dakota United believes this number is attainable and we hope for serious consideration as this bill moves forward for further debate and deliberation.

With that, I will attempt to address any questions you may have.