

1 SB 2340

2 Testimony in Support

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4 Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee. For the record my name is Dr.
5 Michael McNeff – I serve as the superintendent of schools in Rugby, ND. I come to you today to
6 provide information on how difficult it is to find a traditionally trained school counselor and to
7 suggest a small amendment to the bill.

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9 SB 2340 provides flexibility and allows school districts to meet the 300 students to 1 counselor
10 ratio criteria as described in 15.1-06-19 in elementary and secondary schools. The bill expands
11 the applicant pool for schools to include several other related fields that could fill the school
12 counselor position at a school district. These include a licensed social worker, licensed professional
13 counselor, licensed marriage and family therapist, licensed psychologist, or a licensed addiction
14 counselor.

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16 Our school district has had an open high school counselor position for a month and we have not
17 received an application to date. This bill would provide more flexibility for schools to provide a
18 licensed professional to meet the school counselor requirement. These other licensed professionals
19 are likely living within our communities and may be interested in working in our schools.

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21 I am suggesting an amendment that would add ‘vocational rehabilitation counselor’ to the list
22 within lines 3 and 4 on page 2 of the bill. School districts work closely with vocational
23 rehabilitation counselors and I believe they would provide an excellent alternative if a school
24 district could not find a traditionally trained school counselor.

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26 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors provide case management services to individuals with
27 disabilities, which include: ongoing vocational counseling, job development, job search assistance,
28 and placement services to students. These counselors also work with families to provide transition
29 services to high school students including attending IEP meetings, career interest testing,
30 assistance with FAFSA, college exploration, follow-up consultation with area businesses
31 regarding job placement, and ongoing vocational support.

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Suggested amendment:

"Counselor" means an individual who meets the requirements of an approved program of graduate study in school guidance and counseling from a college or university approved by the education standards and practices board, a school psychologist recognized by the education standards and practices board, or a licensed social worker, **licensed vocational rehabilitation counselor**, licensed professional counselor, licensed marriage and family therapist, licensed psychologist, or licensed addiction counselor.

10 Please issue a Do Pass on SB 2340 with the suggested amendment.