



Great Public Schools

Great Public Service

Testimony Before the Senate State and Local Government Committee

SB 2239

Friday, January 27, 2023

Chairwoman Roers and members of the Committee, for the record, I am Nick Archuleta, and I am proud to serve as president of North Dakota United. On behalf of our 11,500 dedicated public servants, I rise today in support of SB 2239 and to urge a **do pass** recommendation.

Madam Chair, of the bills related to the PERS defined benefit plan, SB 2239 is by far the most responsible, the least expensive, and of the greatest value to public employees and the state of North Dakota.

Esteemed members of the Committee, the current condition of the defined benefit plan administered by NDPERS is not the doing of North Dakota's dedicated and hard-working public employees. In fact, public employees have made higher contributions, given up a retired health care benefit, and accepted a decrease of the benefit multiplier from 2% to 1.75%. The reason that fund is in the shape it's in is the result of the economic collapse of 2008 and 2009, coupled with the ND Legislature's refusal to fully fund the plan to put the DB plan on a trajectory to be fully funded. The Legislature failed to do so in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019 and last session. In contrast, the legislature *did* fund the plan to put the Teachers Fund for Retirement (TFFR) on a course to being fully funded in 2011 and TFFR has not been back to the Legislature since then. One is left to wonder why the PERS DB was denied the same consideration afforded to TFFR all those years ago.

Regardless, we cannot turn back the hands of time. We must do what is in the best interest of the plan, current members of the plan, and future public employees. Madam chair, SB 2239 is that vehicle. It preserves the DB plan, sets it on a trajectory to be fully funded, and will continue to serve as a proven tool to recruit and retain dedicated, trusted, and highly skilled public employees.

For these reasons Chairwoman Roers and members of the Committee, I urge a do pass Committee recommendation for SB 2239.