

Testimony in Support of HB 1329

Chairman Wobbema and Members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee.

For the record, my name is Bob Marthaller, representing North Dakota United and its membership consisting of teachers, k-12 support personnel, Higher Education faculty and staff and state employees. I stand to speak in support of HB 1329.

As you are aware, the North Dakota legislature has over the last many years implemented alternative pathways to teacher licensure to help mitigate the teacher shortage we are experiencing in many North Dakota school districts. Largely due to your leadership and support, North Dakota has made every effort to assist and accommodate newly licensed and permitted teachers to enter the teaching profession and to begin serving students.

Chairman Wobbema and committee members, by lowering the number of years one must teach to be eligible for a lifetime license from 30 to 20 years, HB 1329 provides an opportunity to thank those teachers who were previously licensed and have strived and continue to meet the needs of students and school districts. Recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers is a goal we are all working toward, and this one small incentive may prove helpful in achieving that goal.

You may hear opposition testimony expressing concern that if teachers earn lifetime licensure, they will essentially quit taking courses and earning credits. That argument discounts entirely the fact that teachers, regardless of the type of licensure they hold, have to take coursework to make lane changes and advance on the salary schedule. In addition, teachers, on their own volition, complete many hours of meaningful professional development provided by school districts, the state or through other entities. Most important, and I can tell you this through my own experience and observation as a former school administrator, virtually all teachers engage in professional development and coursework simply because they want to get better at the work they love and have dedicated their professional lives to doing.

Chairman Wobbema and Committee Members, it is for these reasons that North Dakota United respectfully asks you please show them that their dedication to the students of North Dakota is appreciated, and North Dakota United encourages a unanimous Do Pass recommendation on HB 1329.

Thank you for your service and I will try to answer any questions you may have.