

Chairman Heinert members of the committee,

I am here before you today to speak in strong support of House Bill 1472, legislation designed to carve out a clear and distinct pathway in the North Dakota Century Code for the authorization and operation of microschools. This bill is not an attempt to replace or undermine existing public or private schools. Instead, it acknowledges the evolving educational landscape and the need for families to have greater flexibility in how they educate their children.

House Bill 1472 establishes microschools as their own category within our educational framework, separate from traditional public schools, private institutions, and home education providers. It ensures that these small, community-focused learning environments are recognized in law and given the space to thrive without being burdened by regulations designed for much larger educational systems.

At its core, this bill upholds the principle of educational freedom. It provides families with an alternative choice that fosters innovation, personalization, and a closer teacher-student relationship. By setting clear definitions and allowing microschools to operate outside many of the regulations imposed on public and private schools, we empower parents, educators, and entrepreneurs to create learning environments that best suit the needs of their students.

One of the most critical elements of this bill is the recognition that microschools should not be held to the same regulatory framework as larger institutions. House Bill 1472 ensures that microschools are exempt from stringent rules regarding teacher certification, extensive administrative oversight, and facility regulations that were never designed for small-scale learning settings. By doing so, we remove unnecessary barriers that would otherwise stifle the growth of these innovative educational models.

This bill does not eliminate accountability. It still requires microschools to provide core instruction in essential subjects, ensure students undergo periodic assessments, and maintain records of academic progress. However, it recognizes that accountability should be designed in a way that respects the autonomy and unique structure of microschools. It strikes a balance between oversight and freedom, ensuring that children receive a quality education while allowing these schools to remain agile and responsive to student needs.

Furthermore, House Bill 1472 allows microschools to operate in a variety of settings, including residential properties, community spaces, and places of worship. This flexibility makes microschools accessible and feasible for families across North Dakota, particularly in rural communities where traditional schooling options may be limited. It affirms that education can happen in diverse environments without unnecessary zoning restrictions or bureaucratic delays.

In passing this legislation, North Dakota takes a bold step in recognizing that education is not one-size-fits-all. We acknowledge that families deserve more choices, that learning environments should be adaptable, and that regulations intended for large institutions should not hinder the success of small, student-centered schools.

I urge this committee to support House Bill 1472 with a do pass recommendation as a means of fostering educational freedom, innovation, and local decision-making in our great state. Thank you for your time and consideration and I stand for questions.