

HB 1494  
2025 Legislative Testimony  
House Education Committee

Good afternoon. Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee. For the record, my name is Shawn Kuntz and I am the Superintendent of Schools for the Wishek Public School District #19 in Wishek North Dakota. I am submitting a written testimony in favor of HB 1494.

The main point of my testimony is to point out the issue with providing education for English Language Learners is not isolated to just the big schools. We currently have a pre-k-12 enrollment of 250 students. Of those 250 students, ten are on individualized language plans that are required to submit to the North Dakota Public Instruction State Automated Reporting System. That equates to 4% of our total student population. Sixteen years ago, when I arrived at Wishek Public School as elementary principal, we had a couple of students that qualified for ELL services based on the fact they were children of a household whose main language was not English even though the students did not struggle with the English language. At that time, I was able to fill the ELL position by combining it with a reading strategist position. I want to remind everyone the reading strategist position was a mandate requirement for public schools. Over the course of years, through staffing changes, our ELL/Reading Strategist position changed. Our ELL instructor moved into the classroom and our reading strategist position was combined with another position. We maintained this structure for many years until our ELL student population increased. We could no longer pull our ELL certified teacher from the classroom to provide the appropriate and necessary education for those students. We had to hire an additional staff member to provide the required ELL services to our students. We were very fortunate to find a part time staff member to serve our needs. Finding full-time educators for a small rural community is extremely difficult the way it is. Finding a part-time educator is as equally difficult. Regardless, hiring additional staff, part-time or full-time, creates budget challenges for small rural schools. I strongly support additional funding to assist in providing required educational services for our ELL students.

Thank you for your work and dedication towards our great state of North Dakota.

Shawn Kuntz