



Great Public Schools

Great Public Service

Testimony Before the House Education Committee
HB 1553
Monday, February 3, 2025

Chair Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, I am Nick Archuleta, North Dakota United president, and I am happy to appear before you today to urge a **do pass** recommendation for HB 1553.

Mr. Chair, I will be very brief in my testimony. I just want to point out that HB 1553 is one of those rare pieces of proposed legislation that will make everyone it affects happy. Parents win because, depending on the number of children they have in school, they will be able to keep hundreds of dollars or more in their pockets to invest in other priorities for their kids. Teachers will smile knowing they will not have to instruct kids who are hungry and thinking more about their next meal rather than their schoolwork. Most of all, the kids will be happy knowing that they will be receiving a nutritious and satisfying meal; particularly those children whose families face food insecurity at home. And they will receive these meals without the social stigma that often accommodates a free lunch.

In North Dakota, the state has an obligation to provide a free quality education to every child living here. That's why we have compulsory education laws in ND. We do not charge families for their children to use district-owned Chromebooks, iPads, textbooks, computer labs, or to participate in field experiences. School districts provide these learning tools because they are important educational components which are vital to ensuring meaningful educational experiences for our students. Chair Heinert and members of the Committee, it is time to add school lunches to that list of important learning tools so that every child has what they need to meet their academic goals.

With that, Mr. Chair, I conclude my remarks and urge a **do pass** recommendation for HB 1553.