

Do PASS HB 1553

Dear Chairman Heinert and members of the Education Committee,

My name is Connie Hoffman, a lifelong resident of North Dakota, currently residing in Fargo, ND.

I urge you to support HB 1553, providing schools meals to all children in both public and private schools utilizing the Legacy Fund to support this important effort. A recent poll commissioned by the North Dakota News Cooperative shows that 82% of those surveyed support free meals for students in ND.

Appropriate childhood nutrition is fundamental for the mental and physical growth of children. Childhood hunger impacts concentration, memory, and school engagement. Access to school meals improves nutrition, health outcomes, physical and cognitive development, school performance, and addresses food insecurity. HB 1553 will also reduce the stigma of those children who cannot afford school meals currently, and those who receive free meals through federal assistance, thus providing equitable access to healthy meals for all children.

The Legacy Fund is currently in excess of \$10 billion as of May 2024 and continues to grow. Using approximately \$140 million every biennium to provide school meals to the children of ND would allow funds in the general fund to support other important initiatives.

Do Pass HB 1553.

Thank you.

Connie Hoffman
Fargo, ND