

Testimony of Jon Dryburgh

Hillsboro Public School Superintendent

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2362

Monday, March 17th, 2025

Chairman Heinert, Vice-Chair Schreiber-Beck and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jon Dryburgh, and I am the superintendent at Hillsboro Public School District #9. I am speaking in support of **Senate Bill 2362**, which seeks to open additional means for North Dakota schools to be accredited. Please return this bill to the House Floor with a “Do Pass” recommendation.

As I consider the group that I’m talking to, I noticed that as a committee, you are very diversified. You come from different vocations and have varying numbers of children, from zero to five. My wife and I have been blessed to have six children. What I know about those six children is that they all learned differently. My oldest was talking early, my third child needed help with speech because his older brother did all the talking for him. Some of my children loved reading, some resisted a little. I have worked in eight different schools in my career and I always tell people that there are good things about every school I have been at and there are things that can be improved at every school I have been at. Children and schools all have different needs.

High Reliability Schools take a look at data each year and determine how the school is doing on various key indicators. We are constantly monitoring our culture, our instructional practices, and our curriculum. We conduct surveys, have people come in and provide feedback, and set aggressive goals for ourselves. We analyze data on a monthly basis and track student progress over time. When students are struggling, we ask ourselves what that student needs in order to be successful.

The help that our school receives to be a High Reliability School costs the district money and requires some difficult conversations when things are getting off track. The company that reviews our information is independent of the people we work with. This last summer Hillsboro Public School achieved Level 3 Certification, which means we have a Safe and Collaborative Culture, we have Effective Teaching in every classroom, and we now have a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum. This is constant and consistent improvement.

Senate Bill 2362 would allow us to use this process for our accreditation process instead of using Cognia. I’m sure Cognia helps schools, but my experience has been that schools jump through hoops which allow them to be accredited and then do very little until it is time to be accredited again. Cognia also costs our district money because of trainings we must attend and the number of hours it takes to jump through all of the hoops. The money we spend would be better spent by continuing down the HRS path.

A farmer monitors fields, a rancher knows the health of a herd, a parent notices how their child is progressing and then each makes decisions to hopefully help. We as school administrators desire the same flexibility in evaluating our schools and helping them improve.

Please send Senate Bill 2362 back to the House Floor with a "Do Pass" recommendation from your committee.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.