

Chairman Beard and Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Leslie Bieber, and I am the Superintendent of Alexander School District No. 2 in Alexander, ND. As a teacher, I taught Spanish for 10 years at both the high school and collegiate level via ITV, virtually. I am here in support of HB 1105.

House Bill 1105 provides necessary structure to virtual learning policies, ensuring they serve students' academic needs while maintaining fiscal responsibility. The bill addresses significant gaps in the current system, which has allowed students to bypass in-person courses for reasons other than academic necessity. This misuse of virtual learning placed a financial misuse of taxpayer dollars and of a well-rounded education.

HB 1105 establishes important safeguards to ensure virtual learning remains an effective and responsible option:

- Adherence to registration schedules and deadlines is essential for planning and budgeting. Schools operate on structured timelines, and virtual courses should align with those same expectations to ensure consistency in student learning.
- Prerequisites for sequential courses are critical. If students enroll in courses without the necessary foundational knowledge, we are setting them up for failure. Just as we wouldn't allow a student to take Algebra II without passing Algebra I, virtual courses must follow an appropriate academic sequence.
- School districts should only be responsible for paying for a virtual course if the course is not offered locally and if the credit is required for the student to graduate on time. This ensures that virtual learning supplements, rather than replaces, in-person instruction when necessary.
- Districts should have the ability to establish a minimum number of required in-person courses. While virtual learning is valuable, excessive reliance on it can limit critical face-to-face interactions with educators and peers. Having the flexibility will allow schools to make decisions based on student needs because sometimes, student circumstances need all virtual or a balance.
- Discretion to pay for a retake should be based on individual student circumstances because we all know that life simply has extenuating circumstances. Districts should have the flexibility to make appropriate decisions based on the circumstances rather than blanket decision for all.

These policies are not about limiting student choice. They are about responsible education and preparation for life beyond high school. Our role as educators is to partner with parents in preparing students for the workforce, post-secondary education, or the military. In all of these paths, individuals must learn to adapt to different expectations, work with a variety of personalities, and meet deadlines. In the real world, we do not get to opt out of responsibilities or choose a different supervisor and have someone else pay for it.

The Choice Ready framework emphasizes adaptability and accountability, and HB 1105 aligns with these principles. Virtual learning should be an opportunity for students to expand their education, not an escape route from challenges they would face in any workplace or college classroom.

HB 1105 ensures fiscal responsibility, student accountability, and a commitment to meaningful education. It protects the integrity of both virtual and in-person learning by balancing flexibility with structure. I urge your support for this bill to provide necessary safeguards for our students and our schools.

Thank you for your time and consideration.