



1 NDCEL Testimony in Support HB 1105 – Virtual Learning Policies

2 Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1105, which
3 amends Section 15.1-07-25.4 of the North Dakota Century Code to grant school districts greater
4 authority over their virtual learning policies. This is important for a number of reasons – for the
5 well-being of the student, for appropriate fiscal stewardship of tax dollars, for the financial
6 control of their local budget, for assurance of the student being in their best placement for
7 learning, among others.

8 Currently, districts are required to fund virtual courses even when equivalent in-person
9 instruction is offered locally. The local district has no authority to have influence when a student
10 wishes to drop a course at whatever time for whatever reason and to wish to switch to a virtual
11 course most often being the NDCDE. Having been involved in the adjustment to this language
12 last session, we do not believe the end interpretation of the bill was the intention of the
13 conference committee. This double payment system has strained district budgets, diverting
14 resources from other educational priorities. HB 1105 addresses this issue by allowing districts to
15 establish reasonable policies for virtual instruction that ensure efficient use of taxpayer dollars
16 while supporting student learning. To be clear – last session NDCEL supported the intent of the
17 legislature which was that if a district did not offer a course the student wanted to take that the
18 district would cover the cost of that course. Further, at times a district formally would elect to
19 cover a course to provide schedule flexibility for a student to ensure they could take the
20 coursework locally they otherwise would not be able to. However, this past biennium the
21 interpretation of this bill has not resulted in positive outcomes – we’ve had an inordinate amount
22 of money spent in the double payment of courses – in the millions.

23 While in the house, the bill was amended based on agreed upon middle ground between the field
24 and NDCDE and we believe that what is represented here is reasonable.

25 These provisions empower school boards to make informed, context-specific decisions that
26 balance student choice with fiscal responsibility. By prioritizing local instruction when available,
27 the bill also reinforces the vital role of North Dakota educators in student success.

28 I respectfully urge your support for HB 1105 to promote responsible educational policy and
29 ensure that district resources are used effectively to meet student needs.

30 Thank you for your consideration.

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