

1 **HB 1369 – Weighted Average Daily Membership – by Dr. Jeff Fastnacht,**  
2 **Superintendent, Bismarck Public School District.**

3 Good Morning Chairman Beard, and members of the Senate Education Committee.

4 I stand in support of HB 1369 and applaud the efforts to provide substantial financial  
5 support to your public schools to ensure every public school child in the great state  
6 of North Dakota is provided the educators, programs, and services they need to be  
7 Choice Ready, graduate, and succeed.

8 I could provide testimony on the overall foundation payment and a desire to see the  
9 Legislature be supportive by providing a 3%-3% increase this next biennium, but I  
10 want to share some points on the formula that are more precise.

11 I would like you to consider amendments to address a rapidly growing population  
12 and the services they need to become productive members of our workforce. This  
13 consideration is for our English Language learners. Bismarck Public School, as of  
14 mid-January, had 645 enrolled EL students. EL students are put into levels based on  
15 their proficiency, starting with Newcomer/Level 1, up to Level 6. Last year, BPS  
16 saw a 73% increase in Level 1 students. This year, that increase is another 47%  
17 resulting in now 170 Newcomer/Level 1 students. BPS has 100 level 2 students; the  
18 rest are level 3 or greater.

19 What does that mean for our educators and students? Level 1 students commonly  
20 have little or no English skills. They come in all shapes and sizes, from kindergarten  
21 to high school students. Many assume that we only need to provide translation  
22 through an interpreter or electronic device and we can accommodate these children  
23 while we teach them English. That may work for some of our EL kids, but not all.

1 We have many Newcomers, who are not only learning English but they are also  
2 learning their native language at the same time. These students can speak their home  
3 language, but due to lack of schooling or other factors, they cannot read their home  
4 language. Without the ability to read their native home language, even written  
5 translation becomes a significant challenge.

6 I am asking that you consider expanding the weighting factor for EL students to  
7 make Levels 2 and 3 the same weight as Level 1 is today (.40). This would help  
8 support the services that are being stretched in many of our districts as we welcome  
9 in a more diverse workforce from around the nation.

10 In addition to base funding at 3% and 3%, adjustments of to the EL weighting  
11 factors, I would conclude by stating I support any increase to the special education  
12 weighting factor. The state took much appreciated strides last year to increase  
13 funding for this population, which has resulted in more services being provided to  
14 our students. I will stand finally supporting a 3-year rolling average for ADM  
15 calculation. Having worked in the largest school in the state, and previously in one  
16 of the smallest, a rolling average would provide needed financial stability in our  
17 smallest schools.