

Testimony on House Bill 1404
Presented by Kaitlyn Allen, Director of Curriculum, NDCDE
March 12, 2025

Chair Beard, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Kaitlyn Allen, and I serve as the Director of Curriculum at the North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE). I am here to provide testimony regarding House Bill 1404 and to highlight the importance of this legislation in furthering military career readiness opportunities for North Dakota students.

Traditionally, the North Dakota scholarship has aligned with the Choice Ready framework, ensuring students are prepared for post-secondary education, the workforce, or the military. The recent update from the ESSA Committee has formally incorporated the Military Pathway into this framework, providing students with a structured and high-quality option for pursuing careers in military service. My role today is to outline what this program will look like, ensuring a clear understanding of its quality, scope, and the benefits it provides to students and the state.

Context and Development of the Military Preparation Program

The foundation for this initiative began with North Dakota's Choice Ready framework, which ensures that students graduate with a well-defined path toward post-secondary education, the workforce, or military service. As part of our ongoing commitment to expanding student options, we explored models in other states and identified Virtual Arkansas' Military Preparation Program as an innovative approach that could serve as a reference point. Inspired by this program, we developed North Dakota's own Military Preparation Program to provide a structured, high-quality curriculum that prepares students for military careers while integrating with existing Choice Ready indicators.

This program was built in collaboration with the North Dakota National Guard, ensuring alignment with military career expectations and post-secondary options. Our goal is to create a seamless transition for students considering military service while maintaining academic rigor and career readiness.

Overview of the Military Preparation Program

The Military Preparation Program consists of five courses with two required units (four courses) within an approved sequence designed to prepare students for success in military service. These courses provide foundational knowledge, skill-building, and real-world applications aligned with military expectations.

Course Sequence and Learning Outcomes:

- **Introduction to Military Careers** – Provides an overview of military branches, career pathways, rank structures, and core responsibilities of service members.
 - What students gain: A foundational understanding of military culture, career options, and expectations to make informed decisions about service.
- **ASVAB Essentials: Skills for Military Success** (Prerequisite: Introduction to Military Careers) – Strengthens skills in arithmetic reasoning, word knowledge, paragraph comprehension, and mechanical understanding to prepare students for the ASVAB exam.
 - What students gain: Improved test-taking strategies and subject-matter expertise to achieve qualifying ASVAB scores.
- **Military Health & Fitness** – Covers physical fitness standards required for military service, including strength training, endurance exercises, and mental resilience.
 - What students gain: Physical conditioning, self-discipline, and resilience to meet or exceed military readiness standards.
- **Career Foundations in Military Leadership** (Prerequisite: ASVAB Essentials) – Focuses on leadership principles, teamwork, and ethical decision-making in military contexts.
 - What students gain: Leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills essential for both military and civilian careers.
- **Military Leadership Capstone** (Prerequisite: Completion of three other Military Preparation Program courses) – A culminating experience where students apply learned concepts through project-based activities, job shadowing, or mentorship with military personnel.
 - What students gain: Practical experience and networking opportunities to enhance career readiness.

This state-developed curriculum is unique—no comparable program currently exists in North Dakota. By embedding this coursework into our educational system, we are ensuring students gain exposure to military career options while developing essential leadership and workforce skills.

Current Implementation & Funding Request

- The first course in the program, Introduction to Military Careers, has already launched with 36 students enrolled—a strong indication of interest.
- NDCDE is seeking an appropriation to waive program costs for 100 students, ensuring equitable access for all North Dakota students interested in military careers.
- To date, we have \$192,000 allocated in our 25-27 budget for this initiative and have presented our budget request to the House.

Additionally, we are continuing to advocate for the North Dakota National Guard to secure the necessary Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff required to support program implementation effectively. This additional staffing is essential for ensuring long-term sustainability, student engagement, and program success.

Key Benefits & Addressing Common Questions

1. Why offer a scholarship if students already receive financial benefits from the Guard?

- This program ensures that students who wish to pursue post-secondary education or military careers have flexible pathways available.
- The scholarship removes financial barriers and encourages students to explore military careers with structured, high-quality coursework.

2. What recruitment strategies will be used to engage students?

- Finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the North Dakota National Guard to align recruitment efforts.
- Utilizing existing Guard outreach strategies to ensure seamless access for interested students.
- Partnering with North Dakota schools and counselors to increase awareness of the program statewide.

3. How does this program align with broader education and workforce goals?

- Military recruiters have identified "limited familiarity with the military in the general population" as a recruitment challenge—this program directly addresses that gap.
- We have aligned program competencies with DPI and military standards, ensuring students gain relevant, applicable knowledge.
- The curriculum supports workforce development by reinforcing leadership, discipline, and career planning—critical skills for military and civilian careers.

Conclusion

House Bill 1404 represents a critical investment in expanding educational and career opportunities for North Dakota students. By integrating the Military Preparation Program into the Choice Ready framework, we are equipping students with essential skills and knowledge while strengthening North Dakota's leadership in military career preparation.

We urge your support of this bill to ensure that students have access to high-quality, no-cost military education pathways, and that the program is adequately staffed for sustainable success.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will stand for any questions you may have.