Chair Beard and members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Kori Jensen, and I am a special education teacher at Harvey Public School, teaching grades 8-12. I am testifying in support of HB 1530 because this bill addresses critical issues that impact educators and students, particularly in workload, student and staff safety, and paraprofessional support.

As a special education teacher, I see firsthand how the increasing demands of paperwork, paraprofessional management, and ensuring student safety place an overwhelming burden on educators. With limited resources and staffing, providing the individualized support that many students require becomes challenging. The understaffing of paraprofessionals is especially concerning, as these individuals play a vital role in supporting students with disabilities. Students and teachers struggle to meet educational goals effectively without adequate support.

Beyond these challenges, I often lose my lunch and prep time because I provide services instead. There is little to no time left in my day to complete the extensive paperwork required for special education, as my priority is always my students. Additionally, special education meetings frequently occur during non-contracted hours, yet there is no compensation for the extra time spent ensuring compliance and student success. The increasing demands, without adequate support or recognition, make it even harder for special education teachers to sustain their work long-term.

HB 1530 is necessary to improve educators' working conditions and students' learning conditions. By addressing staffing shortages and reducing unnecessary administrative burdens, this bill will allow teachers like myself to focus more on what truly matters—helping students succeed.

In conclusion, I urge you to support HB 1530 to create a more sustainable and effective education system in North Dakota. Investing in our schools, staff, and students is an investment in the future of our communities. Thank you for your time and consideration.