INTRODUCTION

By Representative Mary Schneider

of

HB 1530--Special Education Recruitment and Retention Study

Senate Education Committee

Senator Todd Beard, Chairman, and Senator Randy Lemm, Vice Chairman

March 25, 2025

Chairman Beard, Vice Chairman Lemm, and distinguished members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am Representative Mary Schneider, and I proudly represent District 21, central Fargo and West Fargo.

House Bill 1530 seeks to address the critical issue of special education teacher shortages. Its cosponsors are a bipartisan group of representatives and senators, a number of which are connected to and experienced with education. The bill proposes a legislative management study on the challenges impacting the recruitment and retention of special education teachers across the state.

The study will focus on key areas such as workload disparities, student and staff safety concerns, paraprofessional management responsibilities, excessive paperwork demands, and broader systemic issues impacting special education. By evaluating these challenges, the study aims to provide data-driven recommendations for recruitment and retention strategies, for improving working conditions, and for ensuring compliance with state and federal education laws.

Ultimately, House Bill 1530 represents a proactive step toward strengthening North Dakota's special education system by identifying and addressing the factors contributing to teacher shortages and operational inefficiencies. The legislative findings will be reported to the Seventieth Legislative Assembly, potentially leading to policy reforms that enhance support for special education professionals and the students they serve.

Passing North Dakota House Bill 1530 is crucial because it addresses the growing crisis of special education teacher shortages and the challenges that hinder educators' ability to effectively serve students with disabilities. Here's why this bill matters:

- Special education teachers face heavy workloads, burnout, and high turnover rates. By studying the recruitment and retention challenges, the state can develop strategies to attract and keep qualified educators in the field.

- Overburdened special education teachers may struggle to meet the requirements of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and federal and state laws. The study outlined in this bill will help identify gaps and ensure that students receive the legally mandated support they need.

- Many special education teachers are overwhelmed with excessive caseloads, paperwork, and administrative duties. The bill calls for an examination of workload equity and necessary support systems to prevent burnout and improve job satisfaction.

- The bill highlights the lack of adequate crisis plans, de-escalation training, and protective equipment for special education teachers and staff. Addressing these concerns is critical for the safety of both educators and students.

- Special education teachers often bear the responsibility of training and supervising paraprofessionals without additional time or compensation. The study will explore ways to provide proper support and resources for these essential classroom roles.

- Excessive paperwork requirements take time away from direct student instruction. The bill seeks to analyze ways to reduce this administrative burden while maintaining compliance with necessary regulations.

- By conducting a comprehensive study, the bill ensures that future legislative actions are based on accurate data and real-world challenges. This will lead to informed policy decisions that create sustainable improvements in special education.

Passing House Bill 1530 is an essential step toward improving North Dakota's special education system. It prioritizes the well-being of teachers, enhances student support, and ensures compliance with educational standards. Without action, the state risks continued special education teacher shortages, increased burnout, and unmet student needs. This bill lays the foundation for meaningful reforms that will strengthen special education for years to come.