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HB 1498

Testimony of KrisAn Norby-Jahner Senate Workforce Development March 20, 2025

Chair Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee, for the record my name is KrisAnn Norby-Jahner. I am in-house legal counsel for the North Dakota School Boards Association. The NDSBA represents all 168 North Dakota public school districts and their boards. I am here today in support of the concept of HB 1498, with some recommended considerations and amendments.

While the NDSBA has not personally been approached with concerns from our member school districts regarding issues with current legislation regarding signing bonuses, we are supportive of any efforts to eliminate inadvertent effects of past legislation (as identified in other written testimony). However, we would encourage the Committee to consider revising the current law regarding signing bonuses, rather than add a new section to chapter 15.1-09 as recommended in the current version of HB 1498. We would recommend the following redlined amendments to current law located in the “school boards” chapter of the century code:

[N.D.C.C. §15.1-09-33.1. School board authority - Payment of signing bonuses.](#)

1. The board of a school district may offer a signing bonus to an individual who:
 - a. Is licensed by the education standards and practices board or approved by the education standards and practices board;
 - b. Has signed a contract of employment in the district; and
 - c. Has never been employed in the newly assigned role by the board of ~~a school~~ the district.
2. The board may pay to the individual the signing bonus authorized by subsection 1 in:
 - a. One lump sum upon the individual signing a contract of employment; or
 - b. Installments over a period of time not to exceed five years from the date the individual signed a contract of employment.
3. A signing bonus paid under this section:
 - a. Is in addition to any amount payable under a negotiated teachers' contract.
 - b. May not be included in the district's negotiated salary schedule.
 - c. May not be included as salary for continuing contract purposes.
 - d. May not be paid until the individual is licensed and qualified for the newly assigned role by the education standards and practices board.
 - e. May not be used for an individual employed the prior year in the same role by another school district in the state until the individual has been employed in the district for two years.

We are concerned that adding a *new section* to chapter 15.1-09 and leaving 15.1-09-33.1 “as is” will lead to confusion and further inadvertent negative effects when school boards enter into contracts with teachers and consider signing bonuses for those who may (or may not) be eligible. Supporters of the bill may have other amendments to offer to address their concerns should the Committee consider revising current law, N.D.C.C. §15.1-09-33.1. However, we strongly encourage the Committee to consider current law alongside the proposals laid out in HB 1498.

Based on the foregoing reasons, NDSBA is supportive of this bill, but does ask this Committee consider amending the current law, N.D.C.C. § 15.1-09-33.1, rather than adding a new section that may conflict or add confusion. Thank you for your time.