2025 HOUSE EDUCATION HB 1553

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee

Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1553 2/10/2025

Relating to school meal funding for all students in public and nonpublic schools and the legacy earnings fund; and to provide an appropriation.

10: 00 a.m. Chairman Heinert called the hearing to order.

Members Present: Chairman Heinert, Vice Chairman Schreiber- Beck, Representatives, Conmy, Hager, Hatlestad, Hauck, Heilman, Jonas, Longmuir, Maki, Marchall, Morton, Novak, Osowski

Discussion Topics:

- School lunch funding
- Legacy Fund Overview
- Nutrition with school lunches
- Financial Restraints
- 10:02 Representative Hager, District 21, Introduced and submitted testimony for HB 1553. #36527 and #36534.
- 10:11 a.m. Landis Larson, CIO, North Dakota AFL, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36458.
- 10:12 a.m. Carter Hass, Student, Valley City High School, testified in favor and submitted #36449.
- 10:16 a.m. Addyson Rademacher, Student, Mandan Middle School, testified in favor.
- 10:19 a.m. Michelle Wagner, Nutritionist, Bismarck Public Schools, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36552.
- 10:23 a.m. Aimee Copas, Executive Director, NDCEL, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36373.
- 10:24 Amy De Kok, Executive Director, North Dakota School Boards Association, testified in favor #36537.
- 10:25 a.m. Mike Krumwiede, American Heart Association, testified and submitted testimony in favor #36494.
- 10:26 a.m. Michael Heilman, Executive Director, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36543.
- 10:27 a.m. Deven Mantz, North Dakota Legislative Director, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36314.

House Education Committee HB 1553 02/10/2025 Page 2

10:29 a.m. Leslie Bieber, Superintendent, Alexander Public School, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36484.

10:30 a.m. Danielle Walz, Constituent, testified in favor.

10:31 a.m. Kaden Nelsen, Student, Leeds Public School, testified in favor.

10:32 a.m. Lynelle Johnson, Director of Child Nutrition and Food Distribution, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, testified in neutral and submitted testimony #36557.

Additional written testimony:

#36049, #36218, #36231, #36258, #36265, #36282, #36301, #36355, #36397, #36401, #36403, #36405, #36406, #36408, #36418, #36428, #36429, #36435, #36452, #36456, #36477, #36479, #36481, #36491, #36511, #36512, #36513 #36516, #36542 and #36573.

10:38 a.m. Chairman Heinert closed the hearing.

Madaline Cooper, Committee Clerk for Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk by Risa Berube

Dear House Education Committee Members,

As a concerned citizen of the state of North Dakota, I strongly support HB 1475 and 1553 which aims to provide universal school meals for all K-12 North Dakota students. According to *Feeding America*, 1 in 7 children in the state face hunger (https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/north-dakota). I commend the authors of these bills for considering the welfare of one of our most vulnerable populations, children.

Respectfully,

Adam K. Matz

North Dakota House Education Committee Members,

My name is Zach Raknerud from Minot. I am writing today in support of HB 1553 and am urging a **DO PASS** recommendation. For many years, I have heard frustrations regarding North Dakota's lack of use of the Legacy Fund. As the fund's principle has ballooned, yet the bottom lines of families have been strained, it has fostered apathy in the citizenry toward their government. I struggle to think of anything more defining of a legacy than ensuring the next generation of North Dakotans are well-fed and, as such, able to learn best. At the same time, this policy would deliver much-needed financial relief to families across our great state.

Anything we do with the Legacy Fund must understandably be met with caution, but this legislation is well thought out. By tying the Legacy Fund to providing our schools with funding for universal meals, it would simultaneously deliver relief to districts and the families within them. Legislators could tell their constituents about this excellent use and be proud of our state taking care of our kids. Gone would be the days where kids feel shame for having a low or no balance in their meal account. It would be a matter of policy that every child that walks through the doors of our schools be fed the same. We should embrace that ambition and deliver for our families.

Please send this out of committee with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

Respectfully,

Zach Raknerud Minot, ND

Good afternoon,

I'm reaching out as a Cass County veteran, father, and one who supports HB 1553 school meals funded by the legacy fund.

In 2022, we were lucky enough to receive a grant for food insecurity. All those funds were soon exhausted for the Bob Woodruff Foundation grant assisting veterans with funds to fight food insecurity in Cass County. The funds of \$3,335.00, were used to purchase grocery gift cards at "Hornbacher's" to be used at their numerous locations in the Fargo area to help feed and to continue our pledge to assist our county veterans and their families. The total number of veterans served with the cards directly was 32. Three cards were distributed to a chaplain who knew some veteran parishioners who needed assistance. The total number of family members who were helped was 72. Notable outcomes of the cards were as follows: one given to a veteran's widow so she could supply food for her guests at his service lunch, a wife taking care of her sick veteran husband with groceries after being in the hospital for months, a single veteran father taking care of his kids with having food in the home and a veteran named Ray Pizarro taking care of his spouse and their two service animals.

Recent data has shown that if families have food, it will in turn affect the way the children grow and learn. A balanced diet and healthy snacks benefit in multiple ways. Proper nutrition provides the energy and nutrients needed for physical growth, strengthens the immune system to fight illness, and supports brain development. As a result, children are often healthier and perform better academically, as they can concentrate and retain information more effectively. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats sets the foundation for both physical and intellectual well-being.

Please keep universal school meals moving forward as it is very difficult for veterans to ask for help let alone for their children. I would deeply appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Deery

VSO

Cass County



Great Public Schools

Great Public Service

Testimony Before the House Education Committee HB 1553 Monday, February 3, 2025

Chair Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, I am Nick Archuleta, North Dakota United president, and I am happy to appear before you today to urge a *do pass* recommendation for HB 1553.

Mr. Chair, I will be very brief in my testimony. I just want to point out that HB 1553 is one of those rare pieces of proposed legislation that will make everyone it affects happy. Parents win because, depending on the number of children they have in school, they will be able to keep hundreds of dollars or more in their pockets to invest in other priorities for their kids. Teachers will smile knowing they will not have to instruct kids who are hungry and thinking more about their next meal rather than their schoolwork. Most of all, the kids will be happy knowing that they will be receiving a nutritious and satisfying meal; particularly those children whose families face food insecurity at home. And they will receive these meals without the social stigma that often accommodates a free lunch.

In North Dakota, the state has an obligation to provide a free quality education to every child living here. That's why we have compulsory education laws in ND. We do not charge families for their children to use district-owned Chromebooks, iPads, textbooks, computer labs, or to participate in field experiences. School districts provide these learning tools because they are important educational components which are vital to ensuring meaningful educational experiences for our students. Chair Heinert and members of the Committee, it is time to add school lunches to that list of important learning tools so that every child has what they need to meet their academic goals.

With that, Mr. Chair, I conclude my remarks and urge a *do pass* recommendation for HB 1553.

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1553

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

My name is Robin Nelson, and I submit testimony on behalf of the Fargo Board of Education in strong support of House Bill 1553, which funds universal school meals for all North Dakota students alongside the National School Lunch Program.

Ensuring every student has access to nutritious meals is essential for learning and success. Hunger negatively affects concentration, memory, and classroom engagement. By providing meals to all students, we eliminate barriers to learning and create a supportive, inclusive school environment.

Benefits of Universal School Meals:

- Improved Academic Performance & Attendance Research shows that well-nourished students score higher on tests and are more engaged. The Food Research & Action Center found that universal school meals improve math and reading scores by 14%. A 2020 JAMA Pediatrics study found that schools with universal meals report higher attendance rates, especially among low-income students.
- 2. **Eliminating Stigma & Reducing Stress** School meal debt and eligibility requirements can isolate students. According to the **Urban Institute**, students in free or reduced-price meal programs often experience social stigma. **The National Bureau of Economic Research** found that universal meal programs increase student participation and reduce the embarrassment tied to meal assistance, fostering a sense of belonging.
- 3. **Supporting Families & Reducing Food Insecurity** Many working families do not qualify for free or reduced-price meals but still struggle to afford school meals. The **USDA** reports that **one in six North Dakota children** lives in a food-insecure household. Universal meals ensure all students receive the nutrition they need, allowing families to allocate resources to other essential needs.
- 4. **Long-Term Health Benefits** Consistent access to healthy meals reduces the risk of childhood obesity, diabetes, and other health conditions. The **American Academy of Pediatrics** states that children with stable access to nutritious meals have **lower rates of diet-related diseases** and better overall health. Investing in school meals fosters lifelong healthy habits and reduces future healthcare costs for families and the state.

While we recognize the financial implications of this bill, leveraging state and federal funding maximizes resources while ensuring no child goes hungry. Universal meals benefit students, families, schools, and communities.

I respectfully urge this committee to support House Bill 1553 and take a stand for the health, dignity, and success of North Dakota's children.

Respectfully, Robin Nelson, Fargo Board of Education February 7th, 2025 HB 1553

Rising grocery prices are placing significant strain on North Dakota families, and the *School Meals for All* initiative offers a viable solution. This policy could save parents an estimated \$850 per child annually— over \$11,000 throughout a child's school years. These savings would empower families to allocate resources toward essentials like housing, healthcare, clothing, and extracurricular activities, reducing financial stress and expanding opportunities for their households.

This initiative isn't just about dollars; it's about ensuring every child in North Dakota has the tools they need to be successful. Nutritious school meals do more than fill stomachs; they provide stability for families facing food insecurity and help students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs states that students are not able to learn when they do not have their physiological needs met.

While federal nutrition programs provide some support, a large portion of North Dakota's food-insecure children don't qualify for assistance. That leaves countless families struggling to bridge the gap. Investing in *School Meals for All* is not only an investment in our children but also in our state's economy. When families have more disposable income, they can contribute more to their communities, strengthening local businesses and fostering economic growth.

I urge our legislature to prioritize the well-being of families and children by passing the *School Meals for All* initiative. The opportunity to give every child in North Dakota the foundation they need to succeed is in our hands.

Jessica Nolz Special Education Teacher Grand Forks, ND jnolz22@gmail.com 2/7/25, 7:31 PM Proton Docs Editor

To the House Education Committee,

My name is Alex Maitheanas, a resident of Moorhead MN, and I am urging the committee to PASS HB 1553.

I want to start by sharing my experience. My mother lost her job in 2006, and was unable to find work for several years after her dismissal. My father needed to pick up 2 jobs in order to provide for her and 3 children. In Minnesota, we qualified for the free and reduced lunch program as we made under the income limit. But during my senior year of high school, my father made slightly over the limit (by maybe \$100), meaning we no longer qualified for free lunches. But \$100 was not enough to cover a year's worth of school lunches for the two of us that were still in the K-12 education system.

Almost two years ago, I remember watching with joy and excitement as Minnesota passed free school lunches for children into law. No longer would parents and children have to worry about the income limit- all students would be able to get free lunch regardless of the income. Minnesota showed that it genuinely cares about both the education and general wellbeing of its students, and North Dakota now has the opportunity to do the same.

I urge the committee to extend compassion to the state's youth and families by passing HB 1553.

Sincerely,

Alex Maitheanas

Support HB 1553

I am the North Dakota Legislative Director of the BMWED-IBT. We are a labor union that represents railroad workers who fix, build, and maintain our nation's railroads, bridges, and buildings. I am here today to urge the DO PASS of HB 1553 at committee and on the floor.

Our members are parents and community members; we have seen firsthand how vital school meals are for our kids. They're not just about filling bellies; they're about fueling minds. When children have access to nutritious meals, they're more focused, engaged, and ready to learn. It's hard to concentrate on math or reading when you're hungry, as we all know in our adult lives as well.

Not only is this a good bill for ethical reasons, but it is also good for the real-time tax cut it would provide hardworking North Dakota families. Families with children have the hardest time making ends meet month after month. While the legislature is dealing with their constituents upset by the burden of taxes, it has the great opportunity to provide that relief right away. This may seem like a lot of money, but all of it would be going straight to the accounts of taxpayers who put you here to make their lives better.

Some may view this as beneficial legislation; however, we argue that it is a moral obligation to provide meals for our most vulnerable citizens—our future leaders, our children. Let us demonstrate that this state is committed to the welfare of its citizens, rather than just offering subsidies to businesses.

Thank you for considering this important issue. We appreciate your time and dedication to our children's well-being. Please vote YES on HB 1553; my brothers and sisters - your constituents are watching.

Sincerely,

Deven Mantz

ND Legislative Director BMWED-IBT

701-833-0182

Minot, ND District 5



February 8, 2025

Chairman Heinert and members of the Education Committee:

I am writing as a North Dakota parent to ask that you consider voting to pass HB 1553.

North Dakota is a very fortunate state to have the ability to afford this through the Legacy Fund and I believe it should be a priority for our state to make sure every child can eat at school without having to apply for free meals.

I understand that we already have a process in place to allow those who need it to receive free or reduced meals. HOWEVER, this requires the parents to actually apply for this and sadly this doesn't always happen. Children shouldn't be punished because their parents aren't able to complete the necessary forms.

My family is very fortunate to be able to afford meals for our children currently, but we have experienced times of great financial stress when we've had to rely on support from others. During this time, including when free school meals were available during COVID, we could not have survived without this financial support.

We all know that inflation has struck us all hard and not having to worry about paying for school meals could be a lifesaver for many families. Additionally, I think there could be an added bonus of approving HB 1475 in that families may use the money saved to put back in our communities by being able to spend more locally.

Please support HB 1553.

Respectfully submitted, Janet Anderson Burlington, ND



Testimony in Support of House Bill 1553

- 2 Chairman Heinert members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am
- 3 here in support of **House Bill 1553**, which seeks to provide school meals at no cost to all
- 4 students in North Dakota's public and nonpublic schools.
- 5 Ensuring that all students have access to nutritious meals is **not just a matter of policy—it is a**
- 6 matter of equity, student well-being, and academic success. Research consistently shows that
- 5 students who are well-nourished are better able to concentrate, engage in learning, and succeed
- 8 academically. This bill removes barriers that many families face, ensuring that no child is left
- 9 behind due to financial constraints. THIS BILL MATTERS

1. Eliminates Stigma & Supports Dignity

- O By providing meals at no cost to all students, this bill prevents the **stigmatization** of children who receive free or reduced-price meals.
- No student should have to experience embarrassment or be singled out due to their family's financial situation.

2. Reduces Administrative Burden

- The current system requires schools to process applications, track payments, and manage unpaid meal balances.
- A universal school meal program simplifies operations and allows schools to focus on education rather than meal debt collection.

3. Improves Learning & Classroom Behavior

O Hunger is a learning barrier. Children who are not hungry perform better academically, show improved behavior, and have fewer disciplinary issues.

4. Respects Local Control While Providing State Support

- School districts will continue managing their meal programs, while the state allocates necessary funding to ensure meals remain free for all students.
- This allows local schools to focus on quality meal service rather than financial constraints.

5. Utilizes Legacy Fund Earnings for Long-Term Investment in Education

- o HB 1553 responsibly directs \$140 million from the Legacy Earnings Fund to cover school meal costs, ensuring a sustainable funding source without burdening local taxpayers.
- o This is an investment in North Dakota's children, workforce, and future
- Every child deserves to learn with dignity, free from hunger or stigma. HB 1553 is a
- practical, responsible, and compassionate step toward making North Dakota's schools places
- 35 where every student has the nutrition they need to thrive.
- 36 I urge you to support this bill, and I thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any
- 37 questions.

1

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18 19

20

21

22

23 24

25

26 27

28

29

30

31

32

Online Testimony in Favor of HB 1553 February 9, 2025

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Hunter Heck. As a private citizen, I am writing to you today in the hope that HB 1553 will not only pass through you, but into law with the stroke of the governor's pen in the future.

I currently work for Montpelier Public School as a Title I Paraprofessional where a lot of our students and their families would benefit greatly from this bill. This can truly be a "tax cut" for all North Dakotans. Families across this state have plenty of expenses they need to worry about such as transportation, healthcare, housing, clothing, education, etc. I have no doubt that parents want to put food on the table for their children. Yet, it can be difficult for some to get money for their children to get fed at school. There's a chance they try to get a second job to pay for their expenses. For others, they cut stuff out of their budget they need. So having this bill into law will give parents a huge weight off their shoulders.

No child, regardless of ZIP code, should starve at school. Our state produces some of the finest agricultural products in the world but can't help school children make sure they get decent meals? Well this bill will make a huge difference for the people of North Dakota.

I urge the passing of HB 1553.

Sincerely, Hunter Heck Chair Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, my name is Alisha Webster, and I am a special education teacher in Dickinson. I am testifying in support of HB 1553.

Earlier this year, an eleven-year-old told me he wished he could drop out of school, to save his mother money on lunches. Students who are hungry struggle to learn. So often, when one of my students has a behavioral outburst, it can be linked to their basic needs not being met. Often that they didn't have breakfast. While the neediest families do have access to free and reduced food, often students or families avoid this option out of shame or family dysfunction making the paperwork hard to fill out. If we could take this burden off the mind of students and their families it would have an amazing effect on their present achievement, and their futures. This would be an investment in the future of North Dakota!

Meeting students' basic needs would help them now and in the future. It would benefit all citizens of North Dakota.

Testimony in favor of HB1553

I want to voice my strong support for North Dakota children being provided with meals paid for from funds in our wonderful Legacy Fund. This is exactly the kind of legacy this fund should support.

Research shows that fed kids learn much better and have fewer behavioral problems.

Also, children should not be punished for the sins of their parents, who may not have the wherewithal to fill out the required paperwork.

The shame children may experience when they cannot afford a lunch would be a thing of the past.

Lastly, as a pro-life state, we should care about the living children as much as the unborn.

Again, I strongly urge you to support this bill.

Sincerely

Alex Deufel District 40

HB1553 in Support Of

Shouldnt the wealth of a country show how well it treats its most vulnerable? No matter the child, rich or poor, they should be given access to a free meal when at school. Studies have shown that children preform better in class when theyve been fed and arent worrying about where their next meal comes from, it also takes a potential stress away from the parents if they are struggling or work different hours that hamper their own time with their children.

As a citizen of North Dakota and the parent of a school age child. I feel it is beneficial to the state to provide free school lunches through use of the legacy fund. Are the children not the legacy of this state? Also so many children go hungry why not provide them with 2 free meals a day. You we willing to increase your daily meal allowance last legislative session so why not allow the children to benefit this time?

North Dakota House Education Committee Members

According to "School Lunch Debt Statistics" on EducationData.org --16,900 children in our state are food insecure. Every year, our legislature debates what we are going to do about theoretical children, while ignoring the real needs of the actual children who are living in our state. I am advocating that we DO PASS HB-1553. The Legacy Fund should be meaningfully investing in our future, by caring for our kids.

Accessible school meals are shown to improve test scores and attendance. Please DO PASS HB1553, and actually invest in the children you have purported to care so much about.

Thank you,

Megan Fuller

Jamestown, ND

Testimony for HB 1553

House Education Committee

Greg Gallagher

February 10, 2025

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Education Committee,

I am Greg Gallagher, a resident of Mandan, a member of the Mandan Health Coalition, and Vice-Chair of the Statewide Advocacy and Engagement Committee of the American Health Association in North Dakota. I provide this testimony as a private citizen and not as a lobbyist or representative for any other party. I testify in support of HB 1553 based on my understanding of this matter gained through my involvement with these and other organizations, and my over four-decades long career involving educational matters.

HB 1553 presents, as does HB 1475 to which I have previously provided testimony, a long-overdue remedy to a persistent school readiness hurdle: how to provide nutritious meals to all students in our state's elementary and secondary schools as a component of their education, thereby affording them the best opportunity to learn and grow academically and socially to their fullest potential. I commend the sponsors of this bill for advancing a vehicle to consider an alternative approach to funding this initiative. Whichever funding approach is ultimately selected by the Committee, whether it be from HB 1553 or HB 1475, hold true to the fundamental policy intent of providing school meals to students.

Both HB 1553 and HB 1475 ensure that students who would not otherwise be eligible to receive school meals will be provided such an opportunity. Although federal programs offer some level of funding for low-income families, the specified eligibility levels have long been identified as too low, burdened by paperwork, or perceived as a source of shame for families. Students have been known to go without food rather than place themselves in a position of shame. Some schools attempt to help some students with a simple cheese sandwich--if they are aware or can. Some individuals may criticize providing school meals, observing that parents should have "skin in the game" by providing for their children's lunches. Yet, it is the child who

ultimately suffers the hunger, shame, and disregard of a system that appears all too indifferent to their experienced reality.

HB 1553 leverages federal funding to help offset state expenses. Some parents may continue to prepare lunches and snacks for their children. Yet for many parents, school meals provided under HB 1553 will be received gratefully as a means to reduce their financial burden or other stressors.

School meal programs are widely popular with voters and the public. It has been my experience that when individuals are asked about providing school meals to students, many people express surprise that students are not already provided food as a component of education in our schools. The public supports the intent of both HB 1553 and HB 1475.

Where HB 1553 and HB 1475 effectively differ is in specifying from which source funding would be drawn: either the General Fund or the Legacy Fund. I encourage the House Education Committee to choose that bill which best advances this policy initiative through to ultimate passage. Work to perfect the selected bill, ensuring that the policy statements are sound, and the selected funding source is most defensible—at least in the eyes of the House Appropriations Committee. Do not leave a hole from which the Appropriations Committee might stray from their funding role and delve into your role for policy development, which has been known to happen.

I believe HB 1475 offers the best foundational basis to secure the needed policy statement. HB 1553's contribution is to ensure that the Committee consider the best options to structure and fund this initiative.

I ask that you vote to provide school meals to the children of our state. Please structure a reconciliation between HB 1553 and HB 1475 to accomplish this aim.

Thank you.

Do PASS HB 1553

Dear Chairman Heinert and members of the Education Committee,

My name is Connie Hoffman, a lifelong resident of North Dakota, currently residing I Fargo, ND.

I urge you to support HB 1553, providing schools meals to all children in both public and privates schools utilizing the Legacy Fund to support this important effort. A recent poll commissioned by the North Dakota News Cooperative shows that 82% of those surveyed support free meals for students in ND.

Appropriate childhood nutrition is fundamental for the mental and physical growth of children. Childhood hunger impacts concentration, memory, and school engagement. Access to school meals improves nutrition, health outcomes, physical and cognitive development, school performance, and addresses food insecurity. HB 1553 will also reduce the stigma of those children who cannot afford school meals currently, and those who receive free meals through federal assistance, thus providing equitable access to healthy meals for all children.

The Legacy Fund is currently in excess of \$10 billion as of May 2024 and continues to grow. Using approximately \$140 million every biennium to provide school meals to the children of ND would allow funds in the general fund to support other important initiatives.

Do Pass HB 1553. Thank you.

Connie Hoffman Fargo, ND Birgit Pruess, Ph.D. Biology 3696 Harrison St. S Fargo, ND February 9, 2025

RE: HB1553

Dear members of the 69th Legislative Assembly of North Dakota,

I am a resident of Fargo, ND. Please, accept the below as my testimony IN FAVOR of HB1553, relating to the provision of free meals to school students to be paid from legacy earning funds.

I have a hard time even starting to express why this is important and why the time is so right for it. These are our kids and that means they are our future and the future of this country, economically and with every other respect. Aside from the fact that nobody should go hungry because we are all human beings, nobody can learn and concentrate when they are hungry. It is unfortunate that so many of the citizens in our state do not have the resources to take care of their own kids in this way. For many students, the school lunch may be the only meal they can get during the day and I am perfectly happy to use our state resources to help out.

For our kids.

I support HB1553 and recommend a PASS vote.

As in all my testimonies, I much appreciate the hard work and dedication that each member of my state legislative assembly puts into our state. Thank you.

Sincerely and respectfully Birgit Pruess, Ph.D. Biology

Members of the House Education Committee

I'm a long-time resident of the State of ND writing to you in favor of HB1553. I support free school lunches for the children of North Dakota because as a child of a single mother, I know first hand just how valuable something like this can be for the children and their families. This is not something that only affects children of single parent families either. For many families, it is a struggle to make ends meet on a monthly basis, especially given the current cost of living crisis we are all experiencing.

Food insecurity affects families in all 53 counties in North Dakota. According to "School Lunch Debt Statistics" on EducationData.org, 16,900 children in our state are food insecure. This bill would considerably offset that, saving those families up to and more than \$850 a year. Many families in our state have to use food pantries to literally put food on the table. Children who are supported with healthy meals are much more likely to succeed academically, with reduced hunger being a great support to their health.

It is for these reasons mentioned that I firmly ask you to stand IN FAVOR of HB1553.

Thank you,

Scott Heidinger

Jamestown, ND

Testimony in Support of HB 1553

Carter Hass February 13, 2025

Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Vice Chairman, and honorable members of The House Education Committee. I stand before you today, urging you to give a DO PASS recommendation for this bill.

Growing up, my family almost always qualified for reduced meals. While I can testify today that my family **is** in a ideal position regarding income and employment. I can also say that we have had our fair share of moderately challenging situations. I am blessed to have everything I do, but I've been in a position where government services are a part of those blessings. So I ask you to consider the services this bill would provide a "blessing."

First, I'd like to look at the rights of students. The United Nations regards the right to food for schoolchildren as "intrinsic to the human right to have access to sufficient safe and nutritious food." In other words, the right to eat is a human right due to the governmental obligations to ensure the health of all students. When we talk about the rights of people and the law, we have to talk about the government's and parents' responsibility. Every parent is responsible for keeping their children safe, well-fed, and loved. They don't get to choose. It is an occupational responsibility that they signed up for when deciding to have a child. Likewise, the government is responsible for protecting its citizens, especially the most vulnerable. In publicly funded schools, it is the responsibility of keeping the children healthy; therefore, feeding them is a part of that responsibility. The right to food is a human right and an obligation of any modern government.

But let's talk more about the parental side of things. Let me remind the honorable members of The House Education Committee that you represent the 9.8% of North Dakotans living in poverty according to the US census. And most importantly, you represent the people. You must put the best interests of your citizens first. And they could surely use your help. Let us not forget that a government by the people must be logically made up of the people. Meaning that every senator and every representative is, by definition, "the people." You must put yourselves in the shoes of those in low-income families who qualify for reduced or even free meals. You represent them. So don't forget them.

As a student, I have witnessed children sitting alone at lunch with an empty box too many times. I am directly affected by this legislation. Therefore, I ask you today to fulfill your responsibility and obligations to the people. And to safeguard their human rights by giving a DO PASS recommendation to this honorable bill. And I thank you for all the work you've done for the students of North Dakota.

Carter Hass.

Dear Representatives,

Hello, we are representatives from the Mandan Middle School Student Council testifying on House Bill 1553. House Bill 1553 states that \$140 million will be taken out of the Legacy Earnings fund from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2027 where schools may apply for grants to receive free school lunches for that biennium. Students have had conversations about how our families with average to below household income, seem to struggle filling the lunch account. Many other families feel this burden constantly weighing them down and this is why the bill should be passed. We believe that every school in the state would benefit from the passing of House Bill 1553.

We are testifying for this bill because we see constant struggle with many families throughout our entire community with affording lunch fees. A lot of families struggle to deal with the ever-growing lunch debt because it is very difficult to pay for basic living essentials on top of paying for their children's constant lunch bills. Because of this, many students are in the "negatives" or in debt in their lunch account. Kids look forward to lunch, but because they have a low or negative account balance, it becomes a hassle for them because they are constantly reminded of their low or negative lunch balance, making them stressed out. Even families who are paying for reduced lunch costs still struggle with paying the lower prices because the prices are still too high compared to their household income.

Students who don't receive lunches can be negatively affected both physically and mentally. According to eatingwell.com, when students go without eating meals, their bodies start to produce Cortisol which is used to help regulate blood sugar, but it also makes people stressed out and anxious, making it harder for them to perform well in school. Kids feel burdened as if it is their fault, leading to not only bad eating habits, but also not being able to academically

succeed and negatively impacting social experiences. Students may also have lower energy when they skip a meal because they cannot receive calories, which stops them from getting glucose or energy, making them less energized to do schoolwork, stated eatingwell.com.

Students feel held back when focusing on schoolwork when they are hungry because of this. Lunch is a necessity because it is important to get enough nutrients in order to support smart and healthy minds.

Thank you for hearing our testimony and considering our judgement and view on this topic.

Mandan Middle School Student Council

HB 1553

Nick Amb, elementary principal at North Border Walhalla. My testimony is my own, and does not necessarily reflect the views of my district.

I urge do pass vote here. Lets just feed our kids. They are kids.

It would be a welcome relief for many parents who might make just enough to not qualify under USDA guidelines, but are having trouble stretching the dollars.

No more letters and calls about lunch balances.

We have never to my knowledge, (at least in the time I have served here, 7 years) turned away a kid or made a fuss about this with the child. I know some districts offer a peanut butter sandwich without shaming the child, but it is still something out of the childs control.

We can do something positive for our kids and families. Lets just feed the kids.

Please vote yes!!

Nick Amb

Testimony of Landis Larson, ND AFL-CIO President In Support of HB 1553 February 10, 2025

My name is Landis Larson, President of the North Dakota AFL-CIO. The North Dakota AFL-CIO is the federation of labor unions in North Dakota, representing the interests of all working people in our state.

I am testifying on behalf of the North Dakota AFL-CIO in support of House Bill 1553.

The North Dakota AFL-CIO and our affiliates resoundingly support universal free school meals for a number of reasons:

Working families are feeling the strain of increased prices when it comes to food, childcare, housing transportation, and more. Free school meals would mean an extra \$850 per child per year that working families keep in pocket. That money gets spent locally here in North Dakota and is good for the local economy.

Even with good union jobs, working families can surely use a bit extra to make ends meet.

We understand that that business is experiencing a workforce shortage, and we believe that free school meals would make North Dakota more competitive in attracting workers with young families.

When we think of targeted relief for working families in North Dakota, there is no more efficient and accountable method than providing nutrition in the form of meals while children are at school. We know exactly where that relief is going and how it's helping.

The North Dakota AFL-CIO and our union affiliates have repeatedly, year after year, passed resolutions and motions of support at union meetings and state conventions in support of this issue.

We will continue to spend our time and resources talking about free school meals because it is such a common sense idea that our members deeply care about. It's also the right thing to do for our kids.

This is exactly the kind of bold economic relief that working families will appreciate for generations to come. We hope you can support a "Do Pass" on House Bill 1553 and be part of history in passing one of the most popular and meaningful bi-partisan bills in a generation.

I have attached the list of organizations who are part of the Together for School Meals coalition that are also in support of free school meals..



Together for School Meals is a coalition of food security organizations, school nutrition professionals, registered dietitians, educational leaders, and advocacy organizations united with a shared purpose: ensuring that every child in North Dakota has access to healthy, nutritious meals at school. Together, we aim to make **School Meals for All** a reality—because no child should have to learn on an empty stomach.

- AFSCME Council 65
- Aggie Foundation
- American Heart Association
- BCTGM Local 167G
- Blue Zones Project Grand Forks
- Boys & Girls Clubs of the Red River Valley
- Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees - International Brotherhood of Teamsters (BMWED-IBT)
- Canopy Medical Clinic
- · Carl Ben Eielson Fargo Public Schools
- Cass Clay Hunger Coalition
- College Smart
- Communications Workers of America Local 7303
- Community Healthcare Association of the Dakotas
- Creating A Hunger Free North Dakota
- Ehrens Consulting
- Fargo Cass Public Health
- Fargo Cass Public Health Harm Reduction
- Fargo Education Association
- Fargo Firefighters Local 642
- Fargo Public School Board
- FM Coalition To End Homelessness
- Food Research & Action Center
- Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota
- Great Plains Food Bank
- Great Plains Housing Authority
- Hope 4 All Interfaith Community
- IAM Local 2525
- IBEW Local 714
- IBEW Local 1593
- Indigenous Association
- Interfaith Alliance of North Dakota
- LiUNA Minnesota and North Dakota
- Lunch Aid North Dakota
- Missouri Slope Central Labor Council
- National Association of Letter Carriers Branch 205

- New American Consortium for Wellness & Empowerment
- North Dakota AFL-CIO
- North Dakota Afterschool Network
- North Dakota Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics
- North Dakota Farmers Union
- · North Dakota Human Rights Coalition
- North Dakota KIDS COUNT
- North Dakota PTA
- North Dakota School Nutrition Association
- North Dakota United
- Northern Plains United Labor Council, AFL-CIO
- Northern Valley Labor Council AFL-CIO
- Oakes Public Schools Parent Teacher Organization
- OPCMIA Local 633
- · Our Savior's Lutheran Church
- Pembina United Methodist Church
- Prairie Action North Dakota Institute
- Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota
- Reform Fargo
- Rolla Education Association
- Solen Education Association
- St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Fargo
- Stutsman Human Rights Coalition
- The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota
- The Northern Plains Conference, United Church of Christ
- The Prairie Blog
- The Salvation Army
- United Steelworkers Local 560
- United Steelworkers Local 566
- United Steelworkers 663
- United Steelworkers 901B
- USpireND Healthy Families
- West Area Labor Council
- · West Fargo Eats.
- YMCA of the Northern Sky

I'm writing to show support for HB 1553. I grew up in a household with very limited income. My mother was a widow with 2 young children and her retail job barely covered our living expenses. We were lucky to occasionally get financial help from others in her family but mostly we were lucky to be able to afford food at home so when we were able to have free lunches in middle and high school, it was a huge help to our family. The only problem with it was that I and my brother had to use small yellow punchcards to "pay" for our lunches and all the other kids saw that. I was only teased by one person but my brother was less lucky and I couldn't help him defend himself since he was in different classes in a different part of the building. It would've been another great grace if we hadn't had to be so "marked" for harassment and abuse by these yellow cards or even standing out because others could see we got our lunches for free when they had to pay. Making this the norm for everyone will save a lot of misery for a lot of kids so I support HB 1553. Thank you.





Testimony on HB 1553 National Association of Social Workers – North Dakota Chapter House Education Committee February 10, 2025

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee:

The National Association of Social Workers—North Dakota Chapter (NASW-ND) strongly **supports HB 1553**, which addresses the critical need to fund free school meal programs for all students in both public and nonpublic schools.

Education plays a critical role in shaping children's development, and NASW believes all students should have access to a quality education in a safe, supportive environment. Hunger can significantly impede academic performance, leading to poor outcomes and higher absenteeism. For this reason, NASW-ND emphasizes the importance of HB 1553. By guaranteeing that all students, regardless of their financial situation, receive the nutrition they need, the bill aims to remove these barriers to academic success.

The bill's provisions align with NASW-ND's advocacy for comprehensive support services for students, particularly those who are homeless, disabled, or living in poverty. By ensuring access to free meals, the bill directly addresses the needs of these students, helping them overcome food insecurity so they can focus on their education.

Furthermore, NASW advocates for school social workers who support students' academic and emotional needs. By ensuring access to free meals, HB 1553 helps alleviate the pressures that hinder students' ability to focus on learning and well-being, thus fostering a more equitable educational environment. Social workers, who are committed to promoting the well-being of families and communities, view this bill as a crucial step in ensuring that all students have access to basic human needs, including proper nutrition.

In conclusion, NASW-ND is proud of the bipartisan support for HB 1553, which will significantly improve the lives of North Dakota's children by ensuring they have the resources needed to thrive both academically and emotionally. We urge the committee to recommend a "Do Pass" for this vital policy, which addresses both immediate needs and long-term outcomes for students.

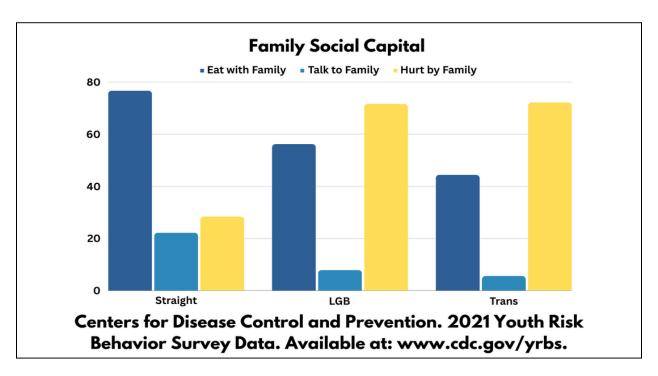
Sydney Trottier, MSW, LBSW NASW-ND Advocacy Committee

House Education Committee Feb 10th, 2025 HB 1553 Testimony in Support

Dear Chair Heinert and the members of the House Education Committee,

I urge a "Do Pass" on HB 1553.

When looking at data from the 2021 YRBS, we find that for many youths, they do not eat with their families, talk to their families when they're having a problem, and also report experiencing harm from their families. While there are many loving parents and families across our state, there are some where kids are starving and suffering.



How does a kid concentrate in school when they're hungry? How does a kid have hope or avoid depression when they don't know where they'll eat? If we're taking upstream prevention I can hardly think of a better investment than feeding kids, because without this, they very much don't have the basic necessities of life or a decent shot at it.

I know in the past we have talked about parental responsibility on these bills or leveraged this as a quasi tax break to help families reduce the cost of raising kids. And I think any armchair philosophy about this subject is an exercise in pointlessness if we're not solving hunger for kids in our state. Parents should be responsible, families should have support, but if kids are starving then I'm not sure I care about any of that. The only thing that matters in this conversation is the kids and they deserve to eat no matter the circumstances of their home.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state, Faye Seidler

Testimony in Support of Universal School Meals for All Students

Chairman Heinart and Members of the Committee,

I am here today to express my strong support for House Bill 1553. My name is Leslie Bieber and I am the Superintendent of Alexander Public School District. This bill represents an equitable investment in North Dakota's children who are our TRUE Legacy.

Decades of research confirm that proper nutrition is a fundamental driver of student success. Children who receive consistent, nutritious meals experience improved cognitive function better attendance and higher academic performance.

North Dakota has a proud tradition of supporting families, and this bill upholds that value by ensuring all students whether in public or private settings receive the nourishment they need to reach their full potential.

This initiative aligns with the principles of an Education Savings Account (ESA) by alleviating an essential educational expense, school meals, and allowing families to redirect those savings toward tuition, fees, tutors, technology, or other educational resources.

Currently, families who qualify for free and reduced-price meals benefit from federal funding, while those who do not qualify must pay out of pocket. This creates an uneven financial burden depending on family income and school choice. HB 1553 establishes a fair and universal approach where:

- The state provides a fixed dollar amount per student to cover meal costs for those who do not qualify for federal assistance.
- **Meals must meet state nutritional standards** to ensure all children receive healthy and balanced food options.
- Private school students without a meal program can apply this benefit toward packed meals that meet state guidelines.

By implementing this system, all families, regardless of income or school type, receive equal financial support, reducing stress on household budgets.

In exchange for this funding, all educational entities, public nonpublic must maintain reasonable accountability measures to ensure proper meal use.

- Schools already participating in the National School Lunch Program have existing reporting structures in place to verify compliance with federal meal standards.
- Private schools that do not have lunch programs must certify that families are using their meal stipends appropriately and can establish minimal record-keeping requirements.

Beyond the educational impact, this bill provides long-term economic benefits to the state:

- **Family Savings Boost Local Economies** Reducing meal expenses allows families to reinvest money into their communities.
- **Reduced Healthcare Costs** Proper childhood nutrition lowers obesity, diabetes, and other chronic conditions, reducing future healthcare expenses.
- Workforce Readiness Well-nourished students perform better in school and are better prepared to contribute to North Dakota's workforce in the future.

North Dakota has the opportunity to provide educational equity by ensuring all students, regardless of school type, receive equal support in nutrition. HB 1553 does not create a new government program but fairly reallocates existing resources to ensure that no child in North Dakota goes hungry at school.

I ask this committee to support House Bill 1553 and take a bold step toward ensuring that every student, in every school choice has the nutrition they need to learn and thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kristin Nelson 2/9/25

5409 20th Street South

Fargo, ND 58104

District 46

DO PASS HB 1553

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing to you today to urge a **DO PASS recommendation on HB 1553**. This bill puts money back into the pockets of families while ensuring their children are **fed healthy and warm meals every day at school**. Families would then be able to **buy groceries for their own children**. Using legacy funds is a great investment and dollars that will not go to waste.

Please continue to invest in our future by feeding our public school kids and **supporting HB 1553.**

Respectfully submitted:

Kristin Nelson (she/her)



February 10, 2025

Chairman Heinert and House Education Committee Members,

As previously shared during testimony for HB 1475, please accept this testimony in support of healthy school meals for all North Dakota's Children in schools. We trust the legislature to appropriate from the state fund they deem most suitable.

On June 4th of last year, your American Heart Association released a Presidential Advisory outlining a trajectory which is alarming, yet we can make transformational change if we start today.

At least 6 in 10 U.S. adults (61%), more than 184 million people, are expected to have some type of cardiovascular disease within the next 30 years, reflecting a disease prevalence that will have a \$1.8 trillion price tag in direct and indirect costs.

It is projected from 2020 to 2050,

- Obesity will increase from 43.1% to 60.6%, impacting more than 180 million people.
- People aged **20-64 years** also will have the highest prevalence and highest growth for obesity, with more than 70 million young adults having a poor diet.

As you reflect on this, think about our 5-year-old children today. 25 years from now, they will be 30 years of age and could have the highest prevalence and highest growth of obesity. Let's not only think of today's impact, let's think of 25 years from now. The cost to feed children nutritious meals today is less than paying for medical bills 25 years from today.

This is concerning yet there can be optimism as together we can create an environment in which all North Dakotans can have nutritional security every day through various initiatives, good policy development and implementation, providing a worthy return on our investments.

Poor nutrition is a leading contributor to the development of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. Food insecurity, a household-level social or economic condition of limited access to sufficient food, contributes to disparities in chronic disease outcomes, especially cardiovascular diseases. While many US food policies and programs are designed to address food insecurity, there is a growing consensus that the focus should be broadened to include nutrition security.

Nutrition security is defined as having equitable and stable availability, access, affordability, and utilization of foods and beverages that promote well-being and prevent and treat disease. Shifting focus to nutrition security is critical for addressing socioeconomic and racial/ethnic disparities in nutrition and chronic diseases.

In North Dakota, deaths by heart disease have risen from 2018 to 2022 by 12% and is the number 1 cause of death in North Dakotans. And, earlier this year the North Dakota Multi-



Partner Health Collaborative (MPHC) was formed to help North Dakota become the healthiest state in the nation and nutrition is a critical conversation to achieving this aspirational vision.

As mentioned earlier, good policy development is one of those key levers to becoming the healthiest state in the nation and one of those policies would be implementing Healthy School Meals for All in North Dakota.

Beyond the fact we may not be able to afford the prospective cost of \$1.8 Trillion dollar bill by 2050 if we don't change our current behaviors, a systematic review of 47 studies, 25 in the United States and 22 conducted in other countries and developed economies, there are 7 reasons why Healthy School Meals for all is a good investment today:

- 1. Providing healthy school meals for all is associated with increases in the number of students participating in the school meal program.
- 2. Providing healthy school lunches for all is positively associated with better student diet quality, particularly in the presence of strong school nutrition standards that include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- 3. Providing healthy school meals for all improves food security among students and families with lower incomes.
- 4. Providing healthy school lunches for all is positively associated with students' academic performance.
- 5. Providing healthy school meals for all significantly improves student attendance among students from lower-income and food-insecure households
- 6. Healthy school meals for all with strong nutrition standards have been shown to not increase student **Body Mass Index**.
- 7. There is evidence in the U.S. that school food service budgets benefit from use of the community eligibility provision (CEP), an option that allows schools in high poverty areas to serve breakfast and lunch at no cost to all students; In particular, schools with a high percentage of students from low-income households may benefit financially from CEP due to increased revenues from federal reimbursements of school meals served.

We ask you today, again, to vote YES for Healthy School Meals for all North Dakota's Children, which is a worthy investment as one policy lever to help become the healthiest state in the Nation, once again.

With respect & sincerity,

Tony Burke, BA, CCMP

Government Relations Director, Regional Team Lead American Heart Association ND/SD/NE M 605.351.5939

Testimony in Support of HB 1553 HEALTHY SCHOOL MEALS FOR ALL STUDENTS 2/10/25

10:00am Education Committee Hearing Coteau AB

Chairman Heinert and members of the Education Committee. My name is Amy Heuer, Co-Executive Director for the North Dakota Society of Health and Physical Educators (ND SHAPE), a volunteer with the American Heart Association, and a recently retired Middle School Health and Physical Education Teacher. I am here to provide testimony and support for HB 1553.

When I started teaching health and physical education 25 years ago, it was to the alarming news from the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), that my daughters' generation would be the first generation to not outlive their parents. They would be the first generation whose life expectancy was shorter than their parents. At the time it was attributed to low activity levels and what was referred to as overeating, causing record levels of childhood obesity.

In these same 25 years, as science has evolved, we have learned that it isn't the extra fatty tissue the body carries, but the damage that it does to our circulatory system, digestive organs, and the brain that is of concern. We are also learning that it is the type of ingredients in the food as much as the amount that can cause the health risk.

Here we are, 25 years later, and we still have the same warning. Our lack of substantive action has not changed the very real issue of our children's life expectancy, quality of life, and the rising cost of obesity. You will be able to read the latest stats and percentages, as well as the cost, both direct and indirect, from other's testimony in support of HB 1553.

While I don't expect Chairman Heinert and the Education Committee to solve all problems associated with childhood obesity, there is something very real that you can start to help all students in North Dakota.

I would like to share some information regarding students and hunger that several studies over the past 15 years agree on.

Students that are hungry:

- Have lower math scores, slower memory recall, poorer cognitive functioning.
- Are more likely to be hyperactive, absent, and tardy.
- Teens are more likely to be suspended from school and have difficulty relating to their peers.

Students that eat breakfast at school:

- Closer to class and test taking-perform better on standardized tests, and will have significantly higher scores in spelling, reading, and math than those that skipped breakfast.
- Have improved attendance, improved behavior, and less tardiness.
- Eating breakfast improves a child's performance on mathematical tasks, vocabulary tests, cognitive function, attention and memory.

In my many years of teaching, I have seen these results in action. One of the best tools for student engagement I had and used frequently were healthy snacks. If a student was hungry, they knew that Heuer had some healthy snacks to share. I knew that if a students was hungry, they were more likely to stop paying attention, start messing around and be a distraction to other students. I would also like to point out that it did not matter the socioeconomic level of the family as to which students would come to my room for a snack, as even those from affluent families might not have had time for breakfast.

Many conversations in education have centered around how to improve attendance, better manage disciplinary issues, and prepare our students to perform their best academically. One proven way to do this is to feed all of our students healthy breakfast and lunch.

You, Chairman Heinert and the Education Committee, have the ability to support our teachers, and the education of all students in North Dakota, by voting YES to HB 1553, ensuring every student has a nutritious breakfast and lunch. The investment we make in our students today is an investment in their future health and academic success.

I don't understand why tax payers without children in the school system should have to pay for the meals of those that do.

House Education Committee HB 1553 - Testimony in Favor February 9, 2025

Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 1553. Over the past seventeen years, I've worked with students from preschool to high school–first as a paraeducator, then as a special education teacher, and most recently as a school counselor. The unrealistic expectation for all families to pay for their school lunches hurts our students, as well as our school districts.

Although there are free and reduced meal plans, not all families who could benefit qualify—and not all families who qualify are comfortable completing the application process. We know students perform better academically when their basic needs are met. We also know that some children's school lunch might be their only hot meal of the day.

For the families who cannot afford their lunch bill, these debts place an undue burden on the school district. With increased budget cuts and annual expenses, funds to cover these costs could be better spent elsewhere—perhaps on the staff we have lost due to funding shortages.

I urge you to please vote YES on HB 1553.

Thank you, Shannon Krueger District 3 Minot, ND I am writing in support of HB1553. I believe providing breakfast and lunch to our youth at school is a must. I grew up in a single parent home and was on the free lunch program in North Dakota. There were so many times that the most food I would get in a day came from my school that I couldnt even begin to count them. I now am an adult with children of my own. My husband and I work full time and still sometimes funds are tight. I know there are many across our state who feel this. Ensuring every child has a good breakfast and lunch helps ensure they are fed and ready to learn while at a school. It makes sense to use Legacy Funds to invest in our childrens wellbeing. They are our future and we owe them the ability to focus and learn while having a full stomach. I urge our representatives to see the benefits of this and pass this bill.

HB 1553

Chair Heinert and the House Education Committee.

For the record, I am Representative LaurieBeth Hager, from District 21 in the middle corridor of Fargo, 12 blocks north and south of Main Avenue from the Red River into a western corner of West Fargo. Within my district, there are 4 elementary schools, Madison, Jefferson and Hawthorne and LE Berger Elementary in West Fargo. Our middle school students attend either Carl Ben Eilison or Ben Franklin or Cheney Middle School. Our high school students attend either Fargo North, Fargo South, or West Fargo High School. Many families in District 21 live in apartments, low income housing, or affordable older homes.

Last week our committee heard testimony on HB 1475 regarding the need and impact providing free school lunches can have on a student's health and well being, as well as their learning and classroom behavior. As you can read in the written submitted testimony on HB 1475 and HB 1553 there is widespread public support for providing free school lunches for all students. In a statewide poll conducted by the ND News Cooperative, 82 percent supported the state's involvement of providing free school meals and only 14% were opposed with 4% undecided.

Today I bring HB 1553. It also intends to provide free school lunches for all students but offers a different funding mechanism. In House Bill 1553, the source of funding would be the Legacy Fund Earnings rather than the general funds. I believe this will provide a more permanent method and solution for funding free school meals to all students in public and non public schools.

Before I get into the details of this bill, I would like to address the timeline of North Dakota school lunch funding legislation. The North Dakota Legacy Fund was established by a vote of the citizens in 2010 and funds became available for use in 2017. In 2019, the ND legislators hosted a series of meetings across the state to hear from the citizens ideas for using the Legacy Earnings. At the Fargo meeting, an NDSU math professor shared a proposal to provide free school lunches to public school students after learning the number of families being sent to collections for school lunch debt. During 2020 free school lunches were provided from federal government with COVID Relief Funds. Sadly this federal funding was not continued during the Biden Administration.

In 2021, the 67th Legislative Session, HB 1413 proposed using the Legacy Fund to provide free school lunches to public school students. The House Education Committee amended the bill into a legislative study to address the questions that are still being asked: Should funding for school lunches come from General Funds or Legacy Funds? As well as several other questions. The amended study bill passed the House but was defeated in the Senate.

In the 68th Legislative Session, HB 1491 was introduced to provide school meals to all public school students from the general fund at a cost of \$89 million. The bill was amended to provide school meals for public and non public students whose families were at or below the 200% poverty level. The House overwhelmingly passed this bill but it tied and died in the Senate. The appropriations committee incorporated funding of \$6 million dollars into the DPI budget to provide meals for students at or below the 200% poverty level. It passed and went into effect for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school year.

Now during the 69th Legislative Session, 2 bills are before the House Education

Committee. HB 1553 is seeking permanent funding from the Legacy Fund. If neither of these bills were to pass, hundreds of families would again be required to pay for school lunches. While hopefully Federal Free and Reduced Meals will be continued, only families at or below the 130 % poverty level would qualify. For example in 2024-2025, a family of 4 earning less than \$40,560 would qualify for free meals and if earning less than \$57,720 would qualify for a reduced priced meal.

A brief bit of background on our state's Legacy Fund. "The North Dakota Legacy fund is a state owned fund that invests oil and gas tax revenue to create long term financial stability for the state. The fund was established in 2010 through a ballot initiative but funds were not available until 2017. This is a strategic asset dedicated to securing long term financial stability that will allow North Dakotans to benefit from the state's natural resources for generations to come."

The Legacy Fund has grown to over \$11 Billion. In June of 2025. \$601 Million in

The Legacy Fund has grown to over \$11 Billion. In June of 2025, \$601 Million in legacy earnings will be transferred to the general fund.

The Department of Public Instruction has estimated the cost to fund school lunches for all school age children to be \$141 million for the biennium. It is basically \$70.5 Million for each year of the biennium.

Remember it is about \$5 to \$6 per student each day of the 175 days of the school year for 120,000 students. Meals for students who qualify for Federal Free and Reduced Meals would continue to be funded through federal funds. HB 1553 encourages policies to incentivize parents to sign up for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

Finally I would like to mention, the economic impact of \$70 million reentering directly back into the North Dakota economy. Each family with school children or grandchildren will benefit by having a more approximately \$1000 more per child in their budget. I think most parents will use the extra money in their pocket for their children and within our North Dakota boarders.

I believe, and I think we all believe, that North Dakota's most valuable legacy is our children. Our children are our future. Therefore, let us, as the 69th Legislative Assembly, uphold the wishes of the citizens who voted in 2010 to create the Legacy Fund and provide the funding for feeding our children while they are at school.

Thank you Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee.

c HB 1553

Chair Heinert and the House Education Committee.

For the record, I am Representative LaurieBeth Hager, from District 21 in the middle corridor of Fargo, 12 blocks north and south of Main Avenue from the Red River into a western corner of West Fargo. Within my district, there are 4 elementary schools, Madison, Jefferson and Hawthorne and LE Berger Elementary in West Fargo. Our middle school students attend either Carl Ben Eilison or Ben Franklin or Cheney Middle School. Our high school students attend either Fargo North, Fargo South, or West Fargo High School. Many families in District 21 live in apartments, low income housing, or affordable older homes.

Last week our committee heard testimony on HB 1475 regarding the need and impact providing free school lunches can have on a student's health and well being, as well as their learning and classroom behavior. As you can read in the written submitted testimony on HB 1475 and HB 1553 there is widespread public support for providing free school lunches for all students. In a statewide poll conducted by the ND News Cooperative, 82 percent supported the state's involvement of providing free school meals and only 14% were opposed with 4% undecided.

Today I bring HB 1553. It also intends to provide free school lunches for all students but offers a different funding mechanism. In House Bill 1553, the source of funding would be the Legacy Fund Earnings rather than the general funds. I believe this will provide a more permanent method and solution for funding free school meals to all students in public and non public schools.

Before I get into the details of this bill, I would like to address the timeline of North Dakota school lunch funding legislation. The North Dakota Legacy Fund was established by a vote of the citizens in 2010 and funds became available for use in 2017. In 2019, the ND legislators hosted a series of meetings across the state to hear from the citizens ideas for using the Legacy Earnings. At the Fargo meeting, an NDSU math professor shared a proposal to provide free school lunches to public school students after learning the number of families being sent to collections for school lunch debt. During 2020 free school lunches were provided from federal government with COVID Relief Funds. Sadly this federal funding was not continued during the Biden Administration.

In 2021, the 67th Legislative Session, HB 1413 proposed using the Legacy Fund to provide free school lunches to public school students. The House Education Committee amended the bill into a legislative study to address the questions that are still being asked: Should funding for school lunches come from General Funds or Legacy Funds? As well as several other questions. The amended study bill passed the House but was defeated in the Senate.

In the 68th Legislative Session, HB 1491 was introduced to provide school meals to all public school students from the general fund at a cost of \$89 million. The bill was amended to provide school meals for public and non public students whose families were at or below the 200% poverty level. The House overwhelmingly passed this bill but it tied and died in the Senate. The appropriations committee incorporated funding of \$6 million dollars into the DPI budget to provide meals for students at or below the 200% poverty level. It passed and went into effect for the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school year.

Now during the 69th Legislative Session, 2 bills are before the House Education Committee. HB 1553 is seeking permanent funding from the Legacy Fund. If neither of these bills were to pass, hundreds of families would again be required to pay for school lunches. While hopefully Federal Free and Reduced Meals will be continued, only families at or below the 130 % poverty level would qualify. For example in 2024-2025,a family of 4 earning less than \$40,560 would qualify for free meals and if earning less than \$57,720 would qualify for a reduced priced meal.

A brief bit of background on our state's Legacy Fund. "The North Dakota Legacy fund is a state owned fund that invests oil and gas tax revenue to create long term financial stability for the state. The fund was established in 2010 through a ballot initiative but funds were not available until 2017. This is a strategic asset dedicated to securing long term financial stability that will allow North Dakotans to benefit from the state's natural resources for generations to come."

The Legacy Fund has grown to over \$11 Billion. In June of 2025, \$601 Million in legacy earnings will be transferred to the general fund.

The Department of Public Instruction has estimated the cost to fund school lunches for all school age children to be \$141 million for the biennium. It is basically \$70.5 Million for each year of the biennium.

Remember it is about \$5 to \$6 per student each day of the 175 days of the school year for 120,000 students. Meals for students who qualify for Federal Free and Reduced Meals would continue to be funded through federal funds. HB 1553 encourages policies to incentivize parents to sign up for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

Finally I would like to mention, the economic impact of \$70 million reentering directly back into the North Dakota economy. Each family with school children or grandchildren will benefit by having a more approximately \$1000 more per child in their budget. I think most parents will use the extra money in their pocket for their children and within our North Dakota boarders.

I believe, and I think we all believe, that North Dakota's most valuable legacy is our children. Our children are our future. Therefore, let us, as the 69th Legislative Assembly, uphold the wishes of the citizens who voted in 2010 to create the Legacy Fund and provide the funding for feeding our children while they are at school.

Thank you Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee.



1224 West Owens Avenue Bismarck ND 58501 1-800-932-8791 • (701)255-4127 www.ndsba.org

HB 1553 Testimony of Amy De Kok House Education Committee February 10, 2025

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Amy De Kok, and I serve as the executive director for the North Dakota School Boards Association. I am here to express our support of HB 1553, which seeks to provide universal free school breakfast and lunch for all students in schools across North Dakota. This legislation represents a critical investment in the well-being, academic success, and long-term health of our children, ensuring that no student goes hungry while at school.

Numerous studies confirm that students who have consistent access to nutritious meals perform better academically, experience improved cognitive function and demonstrate better classroom behavior. HB 1553 would remove the stigma associated with free and reduced-price meal programs, ensuring that every child, regardless of their family's economic status, receives the nourishment they need to thrive.

Food insecurity remains a persistent challenge for many families, and the cost of school meals can place undue stress on those struggling to make ends meet. While existing federal programs provide some relief, they do not reach all students in need, and the burdens of paperwork and qualification thresholds often exclude families experiencing financial hardship. By fully funding school meals for all students, this legislation would create a more equitable and inclusive educational environment.

Some have argued that education funding should be directed toward expanding school choice through the establishment of public charter schools and education savings accounts (ESAs) instead. While school choice initiatives may benefit a select group of students, they divert critical public resources away from neighborhood schools, often leaving public school students with fewer resources and opportunities. By contrast, universal free school meals benefit every child in every school district, strengthening the public education system as a whole. HB 1553 represents a direct investment in student well-being and success, whereas establishing charter schools and ESAs can lead to increased educational inequality and financial strain on public schools.

North Dakota has a responsibility to prioritize policies that benefit the largest number of students and ensuring that every child has access to nutritious meals is one of the most effective ways to support their academic growth and overall development. The benefits of this program—improved educational outcomes, reduced absenteeism, and better health—far outweigh the costs.

HB 1553 is a commonsense, research-backed policy that will ensure that all students have the nutrition they need to succeed. It is a more direct and impactful way to support student learning than diverting funds to school privatization efforts. I urge this committee to issue a DO PASS recommendation on HB 1553 and reaffirm North Dakota's commitment to high-quality public education for all students.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Contact:
Ryan Gregg, Lobbyist
rgregg@ndfu.org | 701-952-0104

Testimony
of
Ryan
Gregg
North Dakota Farmers Union
Before the
House Education Committee
February 10, 2025

Chairman Heinert and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 1553. My name is Ryan Gregg, and I am submitting testimony on behalf of the members of North Dakota Farmers Union (NDFU). NDFU supports HB 1553, which would provide school meals at no cost to all public and private school students.

NDFU's member-driven Policy & Action supports ensuring that every child has access to both breakfast and lunch at school. Our members take pride in producing the food, fiber, and fuel that feed our communities, and we believe it is our responsibility to help ensure that children in our state do not go hungry. HB 1553 is an important step toward meeting this goal by guaranteeing that all students can access healthy, nutritious meals.

We respectfully request a "Do Pass" recommendation on House Bill 1553. Thank you for your time and consideration.



North Dakota Small Organized Schools

Mr. Michael Heilman **Executive Director** 3144 Hampton Street Bismarck, ND 58504 mheilmanndsos@gmail.com

701-527-4621

Testimony in Support of HB 1553

Mr. Brandt Dick President 1929 N. Washington Steet. Ste.A Bismarck, ND 58501 Brandt.Dick@k12.nd.us 701-415-0441

Mr. Steven Heim Vice-President PO Box 256 Drake, ND 58736 Steve.heim@k12.nd.us 701-465-3732

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee,

2 3 4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12 13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

1

My name is Michael Heilman, Executive Director of the North Dakota Small Organized Schools. I am here today to express my support for HB 1553 on behalf of the members of NDSOS. HB 1553 seeks to allocate \$140 million from the Legacy Fund to provide breakfast and lunch for all students in North Dakota's public and non-public schools.

Ensuring that all students—regardless of whether they attend public or non-public schools—receive access to school meals is an important step toward educational equity. Hunger does not discriminate based on the type of school a child attends, and neither should our policies. By covering meals for all students, HB 1553 fosters an environment where every child can focus on learning rather than worrying about where their next meal will come from.

With rising costs of food and living expenses, many families struggle to provide consistent, nutritious meals for their children. The financial burden of school meals, even for families who do not qualify for assistance under current programs, can be significant. By ensuring that all students receive free breakfast and lunch, this bill provides meaningful relief to families, allowing them to redirect resources toward other essential expenses, such as housing, healthcare, and educational opportunities. Good nutrition is critical for cognitive function, concentration, and overall academic performance. Studies have consistently shown that students who have access to healthy meals perform better in

school, have improved attendance, and exhibit fewer behavioral issues. Conversely, food insecurity can lead to difficulties in focusing, increased absenteeism, and long-term negative educational outcomes. By ensuring that all students have access to nutritious meals, HB 1553 directly supports academic success and the well-being of North Dakota's children. This bill is an investment in our children, our families, and our future, ensuring that every student has access to the nutrition they need to succeed in school and

25 26 27

For these reasons, I urge you to support HB 1553 and ensure that no child in our state goes hungry at school. Thank you for your time and consideration.

28 29 30

31

Mr. Michael Heilman – Executive Director North Dakota Small Organized Schools mheilmanndsos@gmail.com

32 33

34

Region 1 Mr. Tim Holte, Supt. Stanley Mr. Kris Kuehn, Supt. Ray

701.527.4621

Mr. Brian Christopherson, Supt. New Salem Mr. Russ Ziegler, Supt. Elgin-New Leipzig

Board of Directors

Region 2 Mr. Monte Mayer, Supt. Velva Mr. Steven Heim, Anamoose & Drake

Mr. Rick Diegel, Supt. Kidder Co.

Region 3

Dr. Frank Schill, Supt. Edmore Mr. David Wheeler, Supt. Manvel

Region 6

Mr. Mitch Carlson, Supt. LaMoure Dr. Steven Johnson, Supt. Ft. Ranson

- 1 HB 1553 -House Education Committee By: Michelle Wagner, RD, SNS, Child
- 2 Nutrition Program Director Bismarck Public School District, Legislative Chair
- 3 North Dakota School Nutrition Association
- 4 Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee:
- 5 My name is Michelle Wagner, and I am the Child Nutrition Program Director for
- 6 Bismarck Public Schools and the Legislative Chair for the North Dakota School
- 7 Nutrition Association.
- 8 Last week, I had the opportunity to highlight the economic advantages of
- 9 implementing free meals for all students. Today, I want to address a couple of other
- issues, first being a potential decrease in meal applications resulting in a reduction
- of federal funding. Many schools link other benefits to these applications, such as
- reduced fees for activities, ACT/SAT exams, dual credit courses, afterschool
- childcare, and even parks and recreation programs. While the USDA does not allow
- districts to require all parents to complete a meal application, schools have the
- 15 flexibility at the district level to require all parents to complete a benefit form. This
- benefit form would follow the same federal eligibility guidelines as the meal
- application. If parents want to continue receiving other benefits, some form will
- have to be completed annually helping to secure federal funding.
- Next, I want to shift the focus on a more personal and pressing issue: that children
- are still going hungry during the school day. I'm going to share real examples with
- you of ND students being excluded from the school meal programs due to the
- 22 financial burden it places on families.

- 1 Recently, I received an email from a Bismarck Public Schools social worker stating:
- 2 We have a family of three here, lunch accounts are at negative 100 dollars each. The
- 3 kids did not eat today because dad told them he can't afford it. The next day, the
- 4 students were brought to school late without having breakfast and were again told
- by dad they **could not eat**. The social worker acted quickly to get these children the
- 6 help they needed, but no child should ever have to endure such a situation.
- 7 In another school district, which asked to remain anonymous, stated two siblings
- 8 came to school, one of the siblings had a bruise on her face. When asked what
- 9 happened, the student stated they got in trouble because of their negative lunch
- balance and was told if your **sister doesn't need to eat, neither do you**. In this same
- district a guardian wrote a letter stating that due to the negative lunch balance, her
- student would only be allowed a lunch from home. The lunches this child was
- provided from home included only Oreo cookies; no other food was included.
- Although the school district involved in these two incidents has requested to remain
- unnamed, I want to make you aware that the House Representative from this district
- is present in this committee hearing.
- Even though the Anti-Lunch Shaming Bill has been passed, it hasn't eliminated the
- issue of students going hungry during the school day. Child nutrition programs
- continue to feed students regardless of their balance, but these examples show that
- when parents are financially strained, and they don't want their child's negative
- lunch balance to grow, it is ultimately the child that is left hungry and unable to
- 22 learn.
- I urge you to think about these children—think about the child who has been abused,
- 24 the children denied food at the parent's directive and the parents not providing

- adequate nutrition for their children during the school day. Ask yourself if the Anti-
- 2 Lunch Shaming Bill has done enough for the children of North Dakota, and whether
- 3 the potential loss of some federal funding is worth the cost of not providing free
- 4 meals to all children. This concludes my testimony, and I will stand for any
- 5 questions.

TESTIMONY ON HB 1553 HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

February 10, 2025

By: Lynelle Johnson, Director of Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs 701-328-4565

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee:

My name is Lynelle Johnson and I am the Director of Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here to provide information regarding HB 1553.

The National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs are federally administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and implemented at the state level by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. These programs aim to ensure that students receive nutritious meals that support their health and academic success. As part of our role in administering USDA Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Programs, our office is responsible for ensuring that schools meet the guidelines through administrative reviews, training, and technical assistance.

In North Dakota, 168 public and 25 non-public school districts, with an enrollment of approximately 125,500 students, participate in the National School Lunch Program, with the majority also offering the School Breakfast Program.

Participating schools must serve meals that meet the federal meal pattern requirements to receive reimbursements and USDA Foods. Schools must offer

meals to all enrolled students, and must collect household applications for students to receive meals at a free or reduced price.

Students qualify for free or reduced-price meals in two ways:

- 1. Income-Based Eligibility Families submit a meal application, and eligibility is determined by household income and size:
 - Free Eligibility: Household income at or below 130% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).
 - Reduced-Price Eligibility: Household income between 130% and 185% of the FPL.
 - State 200 Eligibility: Household income between 185% and 200% of the FPL.
- 2. Categorical Eligibility Students are automatically eligible for free meals if they participate in federal assistance programs such as SNAP, TANF,

Medicaid, identified as homeless, migrant, runaway, or in foster care.

Currently, in North Dakota, 31,798 students qualify for free meals, 7,680 qualify for reduced-price meals, and 1,786 qualify for the State 200 expanded eligibility. Of the 39,478 students that qualify under federal free or reduced guidelines, 25,849 students qualify based on a streamlined certification process because they are either receiving other benefits such as SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, or are identified as Homeless, Migrant, Runaway or a Foster student. The process is called "Direct Certification", and they do not need to fill out applications at the school.

If meals were provided at no cost to students, North Dakota would maximize federal reimbursements while covering the remaining costs at the state level. One available option to maximize federal reimbursements is the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which allows higher-poverty schools to offer free meals to all students without collecting household applications. Currently, schools qualify if at least 25% of enrolled students are directly certified through federal programs such as SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid or if they are identified as homeless, migrant, or in foster care. Schools that participate in CEP receive reimbursement based on their Identified Student Percentage (ISP), which is multiplied by 1.6 to determine the percentage of meals reimbursed at the federal free rate (\$4.52 per lunch). The remaining meals are reimbursed at the paid rate (\$.51). Schools must recertify eligibility every four years and do not need to accept free and reduced meal applications during that time. Currently, 41 sites in North Dakota participate in the Community Eligibility Provision. An additional 50-60 sites that are eligible are not currently participating. Schools that do not qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision would continue to collect free and reduced-price applications from households and claim meals based on eligibility category to ensure compliance with federal reimbursement structures.

The state's reimbursement calculation would be based on the federal reimbursement rates, which USDA updates annually in July. Below is a breakdown of the reimbursement structure.

	Federal Portion	State Portion
Free Breakfast	\$2.37	\$0.00
Free Lunch	\$4.52	\$0.00
Reduced Breakfast	\$2.07	\$0.30
Reduced Lunch	\$4.12	\$0.40
Full Priced Breakfast	\$0.39	\$1.98
Full Priced Lunch	\$0.51	\$4.01

The estimated \$140 million biennium state cost was calculated by maximizing the Community Eligibility Provision and estimating future participation rates and reimbursement rates. For context, in the 2023-2024 school year, North Dakota schools collected approximately \$35 million in federal reimbursements for meal programs.

During the 2021-2022 school year, when all students received meals at no charge, participation was higher than normal. Breakfast participation averaged 38,500 meals per day. This school year, the average is 32,000 meals per day. Lunch participation averaged 86,000 meals per day in 2021-2022. This year, the average number is 82,000 meals per day.

Chairman Heinert and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony. I will answer any questions that you may have.



Testimony House Bill 1553 House Education Committee Representative Pat D. Heinert, Chair February 10, 2025

Dear Chairman Heinert, Vice Chairman Schrieber-Beck, and members of the committee:

On behalf of Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas (CHAD) and our member community health centers in North Dakota, we ask for your support of HB 1553.

CHAD is a non-profit membership organization that serves as the Primary Care Association for North Dakota and South Dakota, supporting community health centers across both states in their efforts to provide health care to underserved and low-income populations. The health centers we represent have locations in both urban and rural communities (see map on page 2).

Community health centers (CHCs) are non-profit, community-driven primary care clinics that serve all individuals, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. North Dakota is home to five community health center organizations that provide comprehensive, integrated care to more than 36,000 individuals at 22 locations in 20 communities across the state. Sixteen percent of those patients are uninsured and about 40 percent have family incomes below the federal poverty level.

The community health center integrated care model includes primary care, behavioral health and substance use treatment, dental care, pharmacy services, and a range of case management services that can include help with transportation, finding community resources, or assistance with insurance and financial enrollments. Health centers are essential medical homes where patients find services that promote health, diagnose and treat disease, manage chronic conditions and disabilities, and overcome barriers that prevent them from getting healthy and staying healthy.

CHAD and our members recognize that many factors contribute to a person's overall health. Access to health care is important, but socioeconomic factors such as access to nutritious food play a significant role as well, especially for school aged children. We also know that food insecurity disproportionately affects children from low-income homes.

Community health centers see firsthand the food and nutrition security needs across our state. In fact, screening data from North Dakota health centers show that food insecurity is the 3rd highest need across the fourteen social determinants of health in 2023. Through a partnership



with the food bank, community health centers in North Dakota are identifying food needs during the primary care visit and distributing food to patients in need during clinic visits. Still, the need for greater food security in communities remains.

We support efforts to create more sustainable access to healthy food and remove cost barriers for families and individuals. We know there are many policy levers to address food insecurity, and we support this critical discussion.

Please support school meals for all children in our state by supporting HB 1553 with a do pass recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration,

Shannon Bacon
Director of External Affairs
Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas



2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee

Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1553 2/10/2025

Relating to school meal funding for all students in public and nonpublic schools and the legacy earnings fund; and to provide an appropriation.

3:29 p.m. Chairman Heinert opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman Heinert, Vice Chairman Schreiber- Beck, Representatives, Conmy, Hager, Hatlestad, Hauck, Heilman, Jonas, Longmuir, Maki, Marchall, Morton, Novak, Osowski

Discussion Topics:

- Breakfast and Lunch for School Districts
- Tribal Schools in School Districts
- 3:30 p.m. Representative Novak moved a Do Pass.
- 3:30 p.m. Representative Hager seconded the motion.
- 3:37 p.m. Joe Kolosky, Director, Office of School Approval and Opportunity, answered questions for the committee.
- 3:41 p.m. Lynelle Johnson, Director of Child Nutrition and Food Distribution Program, Department of Public Instruction, answered questions for the committee.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Pat D. Heinert	Ν
Representative Cynthia Schreiber-Beck	Υ
Representative Liz Conmy	Υ
Representative LaurieBeth Hager	Υ
Representative Patrick R. Hatlestad	N
Representative Dori Hauck	N
Representative Matthew Heilman	N
Representative Jim Jonas	Υ
Representative Donald W. Longmuir	Α
Representative Roger A. Maki	N
Representative Andrew Marschall	N
Representative Desiree Morton	N
Representative Anna S. Novak	Υ
Representative Doug Osowski	N

Motion Failed: 5-8-1.

3:45 p.m. Representative Heilman moved a Do Not Pass.

House Education Committee HB 1553 02/10/2025 Page 2

3:45 p.m. Representative Hauck seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Pat D. Heinert	Υ
Representative Cynthia Schreiber-Beck	N
Representative Liz Conmy	N
Representative LaurieBeth Hager	N
Representative Patrick R. Hatlestad	Υ
Representative Dori Hauck	Υ
Representative Matthew Heilman	Υ
Representative Jim Jonas	N
Representative Donald W. Longmuir	Α
Representative Roger A. Maki	Υ
Representative Andrew Marschall	Υ
Representative Desiree Morton	Υ
Representative Anna S. Novak	N
Representative Doug Osowski	Υ

Motion carried: 8-5-1.

Bill Carrier: Representative Heilman

3:46 p.m. Chairman Heinert closed the hearing.

Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE HB 1553 (25.1123.02000)

Module ID: h_stcomrep_23_033

Carrier: Heilman

Education Committee (Rep. Heinert, Chairman) recommends **DO NOT PASS** (8 YEAS, 5 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1553 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.