

TESTIMONY OF
MAJ JAY SHELDON
NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE
HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
16 JANUARY 2021
HOUSE BILL 1132

Good afternoon, Chairman Heinert, members of the committee, I am Jay Sheldon, Strategy and Policy Officer for the North Dakota National Guard (NDNG) and administrator for the Task Force for Military Issues in North Dakota (TF MIND). I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 1132.

I would like to take a moment to explain TF MIND. It is a Governor's appointed task force chaired by the Lt. Governor with members from around North Dakota with a focus on Minot, Grand Forks, Fargo, and Bismarck, communities with the largest military footprint. The group normally meets twice a year and discusses issues that impact military members and their families in North Dakota. TF MIND has used a Department of Defense website that lists the top issues, heavily focused on occupational licensing and military children to guide its efforts.

The adoption of bills like HB 1132 moves North Dakota in a positive direction.

Military members endure numerous hardships associated with their service to the country while their families endure unique hardships as well. Although this legislation may occasionally impact National Guard members and their families it would most often affect active-duty members and families.

North Dakota is home to two active-duty Air Force bases, over 7,000 active-duty members, 2,000 spouses, and 4,000 children. It is estimated that 2,000 Airmen transition into North Dakota bases each year. Most of those transitions occur during the summer months, but occasionally military re-assignments do occur during the school year.

The intent of HB 1132 is reducing the stress on students of military members. Allowing military connected children the option to start their education virtually at a North Dakota school prior to arriving or to complete the semester with a North Dakota school after their parent's re-assignment would relieve some stress from this situation.

We are grateful for the tremendous effort that North Dakota has made to support our military members and their families through helpful state policies. Thank you for your consideration of this issue. I will stand for questions.