

## HB 1494

My name is Deven Mantz. I live in district 5 in Minot. I am also the North Dakota State Legislative Director for the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way – International Brotherhood of Teamsters (BMWED-IBT). We represent track maintenance workers on the railroads. My union has officially endorsed HB 1494. I come as a parent of 4 children in North Dakota.

A couple years ago this started to become an issue in schools across the country. While it may remain an issue in other states, you have the opportunity to be on the forefront of helping the next generation, at every school in every district of this great state.

North Dakota is a great state, because we take care of our own. Unfortunately, there are school meal policies in some school districts across the state that don't say that. While I do believe our school board members and school staff, have done, and continue to do a great job; some have lacked fixing this issue. It is time that we do that, across the board, to let families know across the state, and across the nation, that we, in North Dakota, take care of our children. We will not treat them differently, with an alternative lunch, where every kid in that cafeteria knows you are the poor kid. You are different. You cannot afford your own lunch so you don't belong in any extracurricular activities.

These children are already at an extreme disadvantage within our society. There are plenty of stats that prove this. While we cannot make everyone's situation better in this world, we can do our part in the very least by not making life harder; and setting them up for failure. While we do believe in individual responsibility, we do not believe that our children deserve the burden that comes from being poor.

A couple weeks ago my daughter told me she was out of lunch money, I am fortunate enough to go on my phone and transfer money to her account in seconds. What I didn't know was that the transfer was not instant. The following day she told me she needed money again, and that her friend punched in her number to pay for her lunch that day. She has some great friends. I have told her to do the same, if she sees someone turned away, to just pay for it and I will take care of it. It's just the right thing to do.