

Testimony House Bill 1132 – Senate Education Committee

Senator Elkin, Chairman

March 6, 2023

Chair Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee, for the record, my name is Dr. Alyssa Martin. I am here on behalf of the North Dakota Center for Distance Education to testify in support of this bill. NDCDE has worked very closely in the last several years with local school districts to provide virtual education to students in need of online education delivery for a myriad of reasons, and we believe allowing military students continuity in their education as their families transfer makes good sense. The way the students will receive such continuity from NDCDE will be in a twofold capacity—an online curriculum that aligns with state standards delivered by a licensed North Dakota teacher, and NDCDE will require that districts choosing us to help them implement this bill will appoint two learning coaches—a family member or other individual who is physically present with the student and can administer tests and a school district liaison who can advise NDCDE on appropriate placement in our courses and help monitor the student's progress, providing coaching as needed. The local district will also be responsible for delivering any needed support services for students who attend NDCDE under this bill and have a Section 504 Plan or IEP. While some larger school districts have their own virtual academies to deliver the new allowable services under this bill, most smaller schools rely on NDCDE for virtual instruction, meaning that NDCDE will be a primary vehicle for carrying out this legislation. We are excited to provide this service to our military families. We noted, however, that NDCDE, which is state-funded, was not referenced in the fiscal note. We're uncertain of how this bill will impact our enrollments and wanted only to add a footnote to this bill that with any substantial increases in our enrollment, we'll need to seek additional spending authority through the Emergency Commission to spend the tuition that we're collecting on expanding our adjunct teacher pool. Again, NDCDE is excited to support this bill because we think it provides a vital service to our military families and encourage a "do pass" as a result.