

2021 HOUSE EDUCATION

HB 1413

2021 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee
Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1413
1/25/2021

To provide an appropriation to the department of public instruction to provide grants to schools for breakfast and lunch for students

Chairman Owens called the hearing to order at 4:20 PM. Roll call was taken with Reps. Owens, Schreiber-Beck, Heinert, Hoverson, D. Johnson, M. Johnson, Longmuir, Marschall, Pyle, Richter, Simons, Zubke, Guggisberg and Hager present.

Discussion Topics:

- Proposal origination, need for program, food and hunger statistics and economic issues
- Lunch debt shaming incidents
- Hunger and food insecurity information

Rep. LaurieBeth Hager introduced HB 1413, #2425

Nick Archuleta, President ND United, #2837

Landis Larson, President, ND AFL-CIO, #2421

Bennett Tucker, ND Resident #2784

Krisanna Peterson, para educator and mother #2611

Lynelle Johnson, Food Service Director, Williston Public School, #2528

Karen Ehrens, ND Licensed Dietician #3064

Additional written testimony:

#3053, #3077, #3045, #3026, #2785, #2700, #2535.

Chairman Owens closed the hearing on HB 1413 at 4:51 PM.

Bev Monroe, Committee Clerk

House Bill 1413

Chairman Owens and Vice Chair Schreiber Beck and members of the House Education Committee. For the record, I am Representative LaurieBeth Hager from District 21 in the downtown or central part of Fargo. Within my district are 3 elementary schools, Madison, Jefferson and Hawthorne and there are middle students attending either Carl Ben Eielson or Ben Franklin Middle School with high school students attending either Fargo North or South High School. I am here today to present HB 1413, a bill to provide no cost school nutritional resources to ALL students attending Public Schools in our state of North Dakota and to use moneys from the state's Legacy Funds to finance this program.

I will have several people testifying regarding the origins of this proposal, the need for this program, statistics on hunger and food insecurity of our school children, and economic issues facing families and a few members of a Family Advocacy group.

I think each of us knows that if we are hungry or tired it is difficult to concentrate and therefore it is difficult to learn or even participate in classroom activities. Furthermore, my counseling background and experience as a mother, leads me to conclude that many classroom incidents or behavioral issues can be attributed to hunger/food insecurity. However, I am not certain that teachers or administrators currently directly track that information. My most valued counseling concept is Maslow's Pyramid. Briefly if one's basic needs at the bottom of the pyramid (food and shelter, security) are not met the higher levels (learning, belonging and self actualization) will not be achieved. In the US, 15.2 percent of children are food insecure. What if a simple solution to enhance learning and prevent behavioral issues during the school day is to alleviate hunger and food insecurity.

The United States', The National School Lunch Program was initiated in 1946 by President Truman after finding during WWII many men were unable to enlist in the military because of long term effects of childhood malnutrition. In 1966 Pres. Johnson extended the program to providing students with breakfast. By 1975 breakfast was offered to all children because many students had 2 working parents. During the 2020, COVID Crisis, CARES ACT funds have been utilized to provide free school lunches to ALL public school students.

For much more recent background information, Fargo Public School had initiated a student debt policy that sent delinquent accounts to collection agencies. This brought awareness to the issue that families were unable to afford school lunches for their children. Several advocacy groups across the state including the Lunch Aid group of musicians in Fargo, a group headed by 2 Female Hockey Gold Medal Olympians in Grand Forks and a motorcycle group in Minot and in Bismarck a group of artists raised funds to pay off student lunch debt. Student Lunch debt is not merely an issue in the larger cities of the state, I am certain that in our rural schools, teachers or others have kicked in to assist students/ families struggling with lunch debt.

Another issue has been deemed "lunch debt shaming" when a child's lunch money account is depleted a child would get a hand stamp or be offered a different lunch perhaps merely a sandwich or fruit rather than a hot lunch. Several states have created policy to eliminate such shaming. This bill would also eliminate economic shaming because ALL students would be provided with a no cost meal. Two of the Elementary schools in my district Madison and Jefferson were designated as Community Eligibility Provision Schools in 2019 which provides that ALL students attending to receive lunch and breakfast at no cost. This is for schools at the nation's highest poverty levels.

as because over 80% of the students in the school were eligible for Free or Reduced Student Lunches.

While the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program is available to lower the costs of school lunch or school breakfast for economically disadvantaged families. According to the 2020 income guidelines for free and reduced lunch are calculated at 130% and 185% of the poverty level. Households with an income of \$33,475 for a family of 4 would receive a free meal and households income of \$47,638 would receive a reduced a meal at a reduced fee. For perspective, a person earning the state and federal minimum wage of \$7.25 has a yearly income of \$15,080. A person earning \$10.00 an hour has an annual income of \$20,800. And \$31,000 would be the annual income for a person earning \$15 per hour. These families would therefore qualify for free and reduced lunches if they had 2 school children. However there a gap exists where families do not qualify or families who do not apply or complete the lengthy paperwork.

The Fiscal note for HB 1413 indicates \$98 Million for the biennium to provide school meals to the 112,000 students attending North Dakota public schools. House Bill 1413 would not duplicate the FFRLP, moneys from FFRLP would offset the state's cost to the Legacy Fund.

I believe North Dakota's most essential legacy is our children and their education is our future. Therefore, let us use the Legacy Fund to invest in the children and families in our great state as per the wishes of our citizens when the Legacy Fund was created by a vote of the citizens in 2010.

I thank the committee for your consideration of House Bill 1413 and I stand for questions.



*Great Public Schools**Great Public Service*

**Testimony HB 1413
House Education Committee
January 25, 2021**

Chairman Owens and members of the Committee, I am Nick Archuleta, president of ND United. I rise today in support of HB 1413.

Members of the Committee, I do not rise in support of HB 1413 with the confidence of a man who believes that this well-intentioned bill will receive a DO PASS recommendation from this Committee. Even if this Committee were predisposed to address the issue of student hunger in the manner that this bill calls for, the price tag would likely give members pause to recommend it favorably.

No, Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of HB 1413 because this bill shines a bright light on an issue of great importance: hungry kids. Educators from across state recognize that kids come to school hungry in unexpected numbers. They also know that that these children show up to learn hungry every day through no fault of their own. They also know the educational challenges encountered by hungry kids are very real and difficult to overcome.

For many parents, writing a check to pay for school meals is as natural as breathing in and out. However, for numerous parents, whose financial reality has been negatively impacted by COVID or other economic factors, that simple act has turned into an inflection point; do they pay for school meals or divert that money to pay the rent? Or to keep the lights on? Or to pay for prescription medicine? Or to pay the mortgage? Or to make the car payment?

What we have seen lately is that students have been "lunch shamed." When a student's account has run out of money, he or she is allowed a meal different than his or her classmates. Usually, it is a peanut butter sandwich and a carton of milk. Worse yet, these students often must go to a separate table to pick up their lunches, adding to the stigma they experience through no fault of their own. In some communities, we have heard reports in recent years that students with a negative balance in their meal accounts have been denied the opportunity to attend prom, participate in school sponsored events, or even walk across the stage to receive their diplomas. As these unnecessarily punitive actions have been exposed, school districts have changed their policies, and that is a very good thing. However, the underlying issue remains and that is, I believe, what the sponsors of the bill have endeavored to address.

Chairman Owens and members of the Committee, I hope you agree with me that it is good to see creative proposals for investing Legacy Fund earnings in North Dakota's children. I further hope that you will look favorably on addressing the issue of food security for North Dakota's public-school students. If you deem that this bill is not the preferable vehicle to address this issue, then I would encourage the legislature to seek the right response on behalf of our students.

This concludes my testimony, Chairman Owens. I am happy to stand for questions.

**North Dakota AFL-CIO**

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**Testimony of Landis Larson, ND AFL-CIO President
In Support of HB 1413
January 25, 2021**

Chairman Owens and members of the House Education Committee:

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 1413.

The North Dakota AFL-CIO fully supports providing all North Dakota public school children with no-cost meals as a basic part of their education.

Over the last few years, our federation has really taken an interest in the basic importance of all working families to have access to nutritious food, something made even more challenging by the pandemic. As a federation of labor unions, we have worked to raise thousands of dollars for our food banks and participated in efforts to raise money to alleviate school lunch debt in school districts around the state. We believe that this bill is the surest, simplest way to solve the problem of school lunch debt as well as ensuring that all our students have the nutrition they need to learn and thrive while under our care at school.

We also know that times have been very difficult for many working families with school age kids in North Dakota, and thankfully the federal government stepped in to ensure that all kids could access school meals during the pandemic. We know that has saved many working families hundreds of dollars each month that would have otherwise been spent on food, allowing them to pay bills and meet their other pressing financial obligations. We think that this savings to working families would be beneficial going forward, and believe that this is an important investment in the future of our state.

I recommend a "Do Pass" on House Bill 1413.

Respectfully Submitted,
Landis Larson
North Dakota AFL-CIO President

Testimony in Support of HB 1413

ND House Education Committee

January 25, 2021

Chairman Owens, Vice Chair Schreiber-Beck, distinguished members of the House Committee on Education:

I am Bennet B. Tucker from St. Thomas, North Dakota. Today I am speaking only on my own behalf. I come before you to speak in favor of HB 1413.

I have a granddaughter, Ella, whom I love very much. A few years ago, when she was in 1st grade, our daughter fell behind on the Hot Lunch bill out of mere forgetfulness. I raised my children in small St. Thomas where, if you forgot, you'd get a call from sweet Betty Walski at the school and she would chew you out and then I'd go and get caught up.

Ella, however, goes to school in Grand Forks. At that time, the way to remind parents was to put a stamp on the child's hand. Cafeteria staff calls this The Stamp Of Shame. Fortunately, Ella was too young to be embarrassed and her peers were too young to tease her about it.

An angry grandfather is not a pretty sight and I was pretty angry. For a school to embarrass a student in front of their peers is simply unacceptable. The staff takes no joy in not feeding children. Their joy comes from feeding children. If the goal of a school's administration is see that some kids come to hate school, then embarrassing students is the best way to achieve that goal.

Make no mistake. The children are blameless here. They do not handle the family finances. They are totally innocent, yet they bear all of the punishment.

Make no mistake. The children we are talking about are frequently the ones for whom a good education is the only path for improving their lives. These are "at risk" children.

Make no mistake. I come before you not only so my four grandchildren are never embarrassed or stay away from the school cafeteria in hunger and come to hate going to school. I come before you because, as a citizen of North Dakota, I don't want to see any of our students hungry or shamed.

So I went to Grand Forks. I know someone on the City Council and he put in contact with his wife who, at the time, was on the school board. They made time for me on their agenda to discuss the problem. Grand Forks stopped using The Stamp Of Shame in the elementary schools and looked into starting up a charity so reduce the number of high school students who skipped lunch instead of suffering the embarrassment of a soybutter sandwich. For most schools, it used to be a peanut butter sandwich; but with allergies they have switched to soy.

Since then, I have tried to remain informed on the Hot Lunch Program. I've read accounts from across the nation when perfectly good meals were thrown a large garbage can rather than given to a child whose family was behind on the bill. I've read accounts of cafeteria workers threatening to quit rather than to continue stamping innocent children. I've watched as other states wrestled with this problem and came up with various solutions. While perhaps a small thing in the grand scope of the world's problems, it has become very important to me even though I've been blessed with a good life and paying some lunch bills is not a burden.

As for the specifics of HB 1413, that is beyond me. I am a dirt farmer. My only qualifications to offer any testimony are that I'm a citizen and a grandfather. I do not know the intricacies of governance. I do not know how the Legacy Fund was supposed to work nor how it currently works nor the priorities set for those monies. However, I do believe that within my House Education Committee we have such expertise. We have here legislators with decades of experience on school boards. We have legislators who were school administrators. We have religious people who follow the gospels and never want to see the children harmed for a situation not of their making. Inside this committee, we have the knowledge and experience to move forward.

So I stand in support of HB 1413. I urge a Do Pass recommendation.

More than that, however, I urge you to come together as a committee and agree the most basic of principles. Shame no student. Feed every child.

Bennet B. Tucker

Chairperson, Representative Owens and members of the committee,

Hello, my name is Krisanna Peterson. I am a mother and para educator from Bismarck. I am in favor of HB 1413. Normally, some students qualify for a reduced or free lunch but under this bill, all students would qualify. I've seen families that don't qualify for a free lunch, struggle to pay for lunch and often the kids don't eat. Even middle class families can struggle at times to pay for lunch. If you have ever gone without food, you understand it affects the students performance and behavior in school. For some kids the only food they get is at school. I have worked with kids from Pre-K to high school age. I can tell you there are more kids than we might suspect that need lunch. I urge you to help our kids get at least one or two nutritious meals. There is no better way to help the next generation than give them food to eat. The student does their best when they have eaten. I recall working at the elementary school when a student in line for their meal had a negative balance on their account. The food was thrown away and they ended up with a piece of bread or a small sandwich. How embarrassing not to mention traumatic for the student. It can happen to any of us when we might not have enough money in their account.

I am asking for a DO PASS for HB 1413. Our kids are our legacy. Thank you!

I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

Krisanna Peterson
District 32
Bismarck ND

Greetings Chairman Owens and House Education Committee Members,

I am writing in regards to HB 1413, using the Legacy Funds to provide free meals for students in North Dakota. Since this would impact my program directly, I would like to offer some thoughts regarding the bill from my perspective. In theory, this appears to be a great benefit to the students of North Dakota. Parents would not have to worry about paying for breakfast and lunch for two school years. This would reduce paperwork for our districts and possibly make it a more seamless process for serving meals. If this bill moves forward, I would encourage members of the Legislature to hear input and thoughts from local child nutrition experts that work in these programs.

A few things to consider when examining the details of the bill:

1. Many grants and title funds are based strictly on free/reduced percentages in the district. How would free/reduced data be collected? There would need to be some funding model put in place because the free/reduced numbers would be affected.
2. Does this bill indicate that only "paid" students would receive the free meals? Would Free/Reduced Meal applications continue to be filled out? Would we collect the Federal Funds for those meals and then "bill" the state for any paid student meals. This might be a nightmare to implement because we would be telling families to fill out the free and reduced application but if they don't qualify, the state of North Dakota will still pay for their meals. This would not allow any motivation for families to fill out the application. We already have trouble getting parents to fill out the application under normal circumstances!
3. Many families do not want the government help to pay for meals. The USDA has granted waivers this year for us to serve all breakfasts and lunches for free at no charge to students, which has lessened our paperwork burden, however, there are still families who do not want the governments help and say they can pay for meals.
4. Something to consider might be using the Legacy Funds for **reduced-eligible students** only. The North Dakota budget already includes paying for any **reduced student breakfast**. (\$.30). This could be expanded to include the parent portion of the reduced price lunch (\$.40). We would still collect the federal money for the reduced meal but collect the reimbursement from North Dakota for the \$.40 instead of from struggling families. Families would still have to fill out the Free/Reduced application and we would still have those numbers for Title Funds, Grants, etc., This approach would also specifically target working families in need who would benefit most from it.

Please reach out to me or food service directors in your local area if you need any more information. Thank you for your time and consideration. This is my contact information if you have any questions:
Lynelle Johnson, Lynelle.johnson@willistonschools.org, 701-651-0164

Lynelle Johnson
Food Service Director
Williston Public Schools

Karen K. Ehrens, RD, LRD
Testimony HB 1431
January 25, 2021

Chair Owens and Members of the Education Committee:

Good day. I am Karen Ehrens, a Licensed Registered Dietitian, and a person who works to reduce hunger in our state and our communities.

Getting enough food every day for a healthy and active lifestyle (food security) is extremely important for all North Dakotans, and especially for children. Children are our future. Children who do not have food security (food insecurity) are at least twice as likely to report being in fair or poor health. Food insecurity in children is associated with poor educational performance and academic outcomes and with mental health and behavioral health challenges.¹ Food at school served at lunch, breakfast, or healthful snacks is a vital source of healthful food for North Dakota's children.

Over the past year, access to food for every one of us has been challenged. For families living with few resources, and at or near the poverty level, have been especially challenged to find enough food every day for their families. The U.S. Census Bureau has been conducting weekly online surveys studying how the coronavirus pandemic is impacting households across the country from a social and economic perspective. This Household Pulse Survey has uncovered that specifically to North Dakota, in April – July, 2020, one-third to one-half of adults with children in their families reported recent food insufficiency in the week prior to answering the survey. Families with children who reported food insufficiency and obtained free groceries or meal(s) relied heavily on food provided by schools; for 7/10 weeks, over half to 90% of families found food at school or other programs aimed at children.²

Organizations and agencies are responding to unprecedented food needs deepened and widened by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic stresses. School foodservice personnel have been adapting rapidly, with flexibility, creativity and hard work to meet the different ways in which education is being delivered, whether that is in-person, at distance, or a hybrid of those ways. School meals prepared and served to children are available at no charge from nearly every North Dakota school with the support of federal funding and waivers through June 30, 2021.

Other examples of how North Dakota organizations and agencies have stepped up to meet food needs CARES Act funding that helped increase cold-holding infrastructure (freezers and coolers) for food pantries and rural grocery stores and to help small grocery stores with online ordering. Senior meals providers received extra federal funding to cover additional costs of packaging for meals picked up or delivered. Many people started or expanded gardens to grow their own food and to share the harvest with others. *Farmers to Families* food boxes and additional federal funding, along with donations from individuals and the private sector, boosted amounts of food available through the charitable feeding networks that include food pantries and soup kitchens. Volunteers have stepped up in these uncertain times to help get food to people's hands. Federal funding has increased SNAP monthly amounts for many who receive it, and Pandemic EBT benefits were made available to families with children when school was not in session. These efforts across the spectrum have reached many people, and all have played a role in keeping people from hunger and food insecurity.

Even with these efforts, however, the latest data available from the Census Household pulse survey in December, 2020 estimate that more than 21,300 households with children in North Dakota reported that they “sometimes” or “often” did not have enough to eat in the week prior to answering the survey.³ Food from schools and other programs aimed at children continue to be the most-accessed resources for households with children to find food help.

Creative solutions are welcomed and needed to ensure that the most vulnerable among us, our children, have enough to eat now and into the future. Ensuring that all the children in our care in the state of North Dakota have enough to eat is a basic minimum that should and can be provided. Schools can continue to be trusted and available partners to get food to children when they have adequate support for all the people and resources needed to provide vital school meals: personnel with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) and wages; food to serve, equipment to store, prepare and serve food during school the school day; and the ability to cover the expenses for doing so.

Experience and research have shown that nourishing food is essential to learning and as an integral part of the school day for all children, just as are books, desks, computers, and the things we assume are necessary for learning. Many advocacy groups including pediatricians, public health workers, teachers groups, nutrition organizations and even the national School Nutrition Association are advocating for Universal School Meals. Universal School Meals, or meals as an integrated part of the school day not singled out as a separate fee for families, can bring many benefits to students, schools, and our society. Food for school children is an worthy investment with dividends of healthier children with improved learning.

References:

1. *The Impact of Poverty, Food Insecurity, and Poor Nutrition on Health and Well-Being*, Food Research & Action Center , December 2017. Accessed at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/hunger-health-impact-poverty-food-insecurity-health-well-being.pdf>
2. *North Dakota Families are Facing Food Hardship During the COVID-19 Pandemic* Issue Brief Analysis by K. Ehrens with support from ND Compass. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey.html>
http://hungerfreend.org/image/cache/ND_Families_Face_Food_Hardship_Pulse_Survey_COVID_July_2020_pdf.pdf
3. Household Pulse Survey Data Tables, accessed 1.25.2021 at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html>

House Education Committee

House Bill 1413

Representative Owens

January 25, 2021

Chairperson, representative Owen, and members of the house education committee. I am Victoria Johnson, and I am a single mother to two boys. My children both attends Fargo public School. I am asking for your support for HB 1413 to help family like mine and other who are struggling to pay for the school lunch.

The school District has reduced lunch program for students who qualify, but not every student qualifies through the reduced lunch program. Our School District charges elementary students \$19.25 weekly for both breakfast and lunch per child. \$385 monthly meal per one student, and \$770 for two elementary students. Secondary students pay \$21.25 weekly for both breakfast and lunch \$425 monthly per student and \$850 for two students. Just imagine family with 5 school age children or 3 children.

Working family are struggling to making school lunch payment and family who cannot afford this weekly and/ or monthly payment children go without meal. No child should go without meal because their parents cannot afford to pay the school lunch. I am asking for your support for HS Bill 141. Help all students eat at no cost to them and vote to pass this HS Bill 1413. Thank you for supporting HS1413.

Victoria Johnson

3120 25th Street S Ste# Z 362

Fargo, ND 58103-3120



Mission Statement
Grand Forks Public Schools will provide an environment of educational excellence that engages all learners to develop their maximum potential for community and global success.

Child Nutrition Program
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Grand Forks, ND 58203
www.gfschools.org

Ms. Emily Karel, RD, LRD, CDM
Director
Phone: 701.746.2436
Fax: 701.746.2295
ekarel310@mygfschools.org

Chairmen Owens and Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Emily Karel and I serve as the Child Nutrition Director for Grand Forks Public Schools. I am writing today in opposition of this bill as *it is written*. This bill appears to provide great benefits to North Dakota students, but could pose challenges in the operation of school meals, funding sources and the state's budget in the future.

I would consider an amendment to this bill changing the language on line 8 from "providing breakfast and lunch, free of charge, for all students" to "providing breakfast and lunch, free of charge to students that qualify for reduced priced meals". This would provide respite for our working families while maintaining quality food services programs.

The free and reduced priced meals application would become obsolete and programs that use this information could see a decrease in funding. Since meals are provided to all students this year at no cost there is not a need to complete the applications for free or reduced priced meals. We have processed about half of what we usually do. Luckily USDA was gracious enough to allow us to use prior year information for funding sources and other meal program operations. I do not anticipate this waiver to extend past this school year.

It would be more beneficial to the free and received students in North Dakota to receive free meals for 10 years than for all students for two years if the legacy fund depletes and funding becomes unavailable in the future.

Please contact me for further discussion or to address any questions you may have.

Respectfully,

Emily Karel RD, LRD, CDM

Executive Director, Women and Girls Rebuilding Together

Hello, my name is Lydia Zondo. I am a mother and childcare provider. I am in favor of House Bill 1413. In my line of work kids do well when they have quality food at school (breakfast, lunch) irrespective of their economic backgrounds. Families who may not qualify because of high income still struggle to pay for school lunches. For example, it is sad to see kids turn away or sit away from the lunch table because their parents did not pay their lunch fees. Hence, I am in support of free lunch for all kids.

Thank you!

Lydia Zondo
District: West Fargo
West Fargo ND
1/25/2021

I oppose HB1413. We already have a program for free/reduced school meals. Why should taxpayers have to pay for meals of children whose parents can afford it. May God guide you and bless you all!

**Testimony of [Nate Lightner](#)
In Support of HB 1413
January 25, 2021**

Chairman Owens and members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Nate Lightner and I am a resident of Fargo, ND. I am testifying as a citizen in support of House Bill 1413.

Last year, it was brought to my attention through my union that there was a major problem with school lunch debt in Fargo, and I attended a town hall meeting on this subject, as well as kept up with the news being reported on this issue in our community. I soon learned that this is not a Fargo-specific issue, and that school districts all over the state were struggling with the issue of kids either not getting enough to eat at school or going into debt collections at the school because their families couldn't afford it. This didn't sit well with me that this was happening. I decided to work with my local union and community fundraising efforts to help raise money to pay off school lunch debt in Fargo. I know that many other communities across the state did the same, but it seems there must be a better way than grassroots fundraising to make sure our kids have enough food while they are at school.

As taxpayers, we pay for books, desks, white boards, tablets, school employee salaries, and in my opinion, making sure every kid has breakfast and lunch is no different than making sure every kid has the other things we provide while they are in our care at school.

Family's across this great state are struggling more than ever and they need our help. I don't see this as a cost. I see this as an investment in the future of North Dakota. Throughout my life I've watched my parents and others in our community step up and help those in need. They taught me that when our neighbors fall, we help them up. Well we have a lot of neighbors in North Dakota that need a hand right now.

I can't think of any better use of Legacy Fund money than making sure North Dakota's children can focus on learning. These children are North Dakota's Legacy, and that is why I support a "Do Pass" recommendation for House Bill 1413. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,

Nathan Lightner

Chairperson, Representative Owens and Members of the Committee,

Hello, my name is Alakiir Nhial. I am a parent and I live in West Fargo. I am in favor of HB 1413. Students qualify for a reduced or free lunch but under this bill, all students Public School should qualify for Lunch. My family and other families are struggling paying Bills and our children's school lunch.

Family's can struggle at times to pay for lunch because extras only cost, If you have ever gone without food, you understand it affects the students performance and behavior in School. For some kids the only food they get is at School.

I can tell you that having 5 kids or more is a struggle to pay our kids extra for Lunch, We urge you to help our kids with the 1 nutritious Meal they need. There is no better way to help the next generation than give them food to eat. A student does their best when they have eaten

Food can be thrown away because the student had grabbed it and had a negative balance in their account to eat, imagine how embarrassed it would have been for the student. It can happen to one of us too, like if we have debts. I am asking to DO PASS for HB 1413. Our kids are our legacy. Thank you!

*Alakiir Nhial
Parent
West Fargo ND*

January 24, 2021

Testimony of Jason Boynton In Support of HB 1413

Greetings, Chairman Owens and members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Jason Boynton and I am a resident of Fargo, ND, professor of mathematics, and a musician. I am testifying as a citizen in support of House Bill 1413.

In 2019, local news sources reported that Fargo Public Schools (FPS) was holding a student school lunch debt of about \$26,000. It was also reported that \$15,000 of the debt had been turned over to collections. My partner Kari Lugo and I co-produced a fundraising event called LUNCH AID 2019 and we managed to raise \$20,000 to put towards that debt. As a result of our efforts, we paid off the balance in collections for AY 2018/2019 and we raised awareness around food insecurity in schools. Indeed, a very generous anonymous donor paid the \$27,000 debt accrued for the first half of AY 19/20 only. There was no lunch debt for the second half of AY 19/20 due to school closings. Moreover, Fargo Public Schools Superintendent, Rupak Gandhi rescinded the punitive action (from the previous administration) of referring students with an unpaid school lunch debt to a collection's agency. Many other school districts have removed similar punitive actions as a consequence of unpaid lunch debt.

Now that schools are beginning to resume in-person instruction, the FPS district projects that there will be a school lunch debt of at least \$30,000 just for the second half of AY 20/21. As a result of the pandemic, it is reasonable to estimate that the amount will be much higher. FPS can expect a debt of \$65,000 (at the very least) in AY 21/22 since school will be in session for the whole year.

It is literally shameful to refer kids' families to collection agencies for outstanding school lunch debt. These punitive actions shame students and their families for falling into financial hardship. To give a kid anything less than a hot meal for not having funds to cover it is the truest definition of lunch-shaming. To refuse to allow a student to walk at their graduation ceremony or attend their prom is shameful. Thankfully, a number of other school districts have agreed to refrain from punitive actions, like referral to collections. We should not in punish these schools for doing the right thing. We can lighten the load for the already-overburdened North Dakota public school districts another way.

How can we achieve all this? The answer is simple. The state of North Dakota can use part of its \$7,000,000,000 Legacy Fund to provide NO-COST BREAKFAST AND LUNCH for all public-school students. The state could easily use one interest payment from the Legacy Fund to set up an endowment that would become self-sustaining after a few years. In other words, we can set up a fund that would provide all public-school students a no-cost hot meal in perpetuity!

Why should the state of North Dakota do this? There are several reasons to enact a NO-COST BREAKFAST AND LUNCH program in the state. First, we (The People) provide almost all the basic necessities for a student to be successful in the classroom. We provide educators, buildings

with multiple facilities (e.g., labs and gymnasiums), textbooks, desks, computers, and many other products and services. Good nutrition is the most fundamental need, and is absolutely critical for student success. Every expert will agree that young minds function the best when their bellies are full. Providing a NO-COST BREAKFAST AND LUNCH is tantamount to providing the best public education that we can. The second reason that we should provide NO-COST BREAKFAST AND LUNCH is that it places all public-school students on equal footing. Kids are NOT responsible for their socio-economic status. Therefore, we should not reward or punish kids for their lot in life. If everybody receives a NO-COST BREAKFAST AND LUNCH, then everybody is on the same level playing field. No student will be judged or shamed if all students have equal access to two no-cost hot meals every day. Finally, we should do this because WE CAN AFFORD IT! This state is sitting on a huge sum of money. For what? A rainy day? Today is the rainy day. We should spend this money on our citizens that need it the most. With a NO-COST BREAKFAST AND LUNCH program in place, the average ND family with 2.5 kids will save about \$2,200 per year. We are not misers. North Dakotans are generous. Let us prove it. Let us be a model for the nation with a NO-COST BREAKFAST AND LUNCH program. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

I strongly and enthusiastically recommend a “Do Pass” recommendation on House Bill 1413.

Sincerely,

Jason Boynton, Ph.D.
Lunch Aid, North Dakota

2021 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee
Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1413
2/2/2021

To provide an appropriation to the department of public instruction to provide grants to schools for breakfast and lunch for students

Chairman Owens called the meeting to order at 9:34 AM. Roll call: Reps. Owens, Schreiber-Beck, Heinert, Hoverson, D. Johnson, M. Johnson, Longmuir, Marschall, Pyle, Richter, Simons, Zubke, Guggisberg and Hager present.

Rep. Hager moved to **adopt an amendment** 21.0873.02001, seconded by **Rep. Pyle**, #4905
Voice Vote Motion carried.

Rep. Hager presented a second amendment 21.0873.02002 to make a study, #4904.
Rep. Zubke moved to **adopt** 21.0873.02002, seconded by **Rep. Schreiber-Beck**.
Voice Vote Motion carried.

Rep. Hager will establish a subcommittee with Reps. Hager, Pyle, Richter and M. Johnson.

Chairman Owens closed the meeting on HB 1413 at 9:49 AM.

Bev Monroe, Committee Clerk

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL NO. 1413

Page 1, line 6, replace "\$89,500,000" with "\$84,000,000"

Page 1, line 8, after "all" insert "public school"

Renumber accordingly

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL NO. 1413

Page 1, line 1, after "A BILL" replace the remainder of the bill with "for an Act to provide for a legislative management study regarding public school nutritional resources.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY - PUBLIC SCHOOL NUTRITIONAL RESOURCES. During the 2021-22 interim, the legislative management shall consider studying public school nutritional resources, including the potential impacts of providing breakfast and lunch, free of charge, for all public school students. The legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the sixty-eighth legislative assembly."

Renumber accordingly

21.0873.02001
Title.

Prepared by the Legislative Council staff for
Representative Hager
January 25, 2021

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL NO. 1413

Page 1, line 6, replace "\$89,500,000" with "\$84,000,000"

Page 1, line 8, after "all" insert "public school"

Renumber accordingly

21.0873.02002
Title.

Prepared by the Legislative Council staff for
Representative Hager
January 25, 2021

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL NO. 1413

Page 1, line 1, after "A BILL" replace the remainder of the bill with "for an Act to provide for a legislative management study regarding public school nutritional resources.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY - PUBLIC SCHOOL NUTRITIONAL RESOURCES. During the 2021-22 interim, the legislative management shall consider studying public school nutritional resources, including the potential impacts of providing breakfast and lunch, free of charge, for all public school students. The legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the sixty-eighth legislative assembly."

Renumber accordingly

2021 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee
Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1413
2/2/2021
Subcommittee

To provide an appropriation to the department of public instruction to provide grants to schools for breakfast and lunch for students

Rep. Pyle called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm. In attendance were Reps. Hager, Pyle, and Richter.

Discussion Topics:

- Importance of making into study to make more robust
- Address food insecurities for public school children
- Looking at private and public opportunities
- Additional services including hygiene, self-care with private partnerships
- Protocols followed to reuse unopened, pre-packaged food stuffs
- Explore the stigma with regard to food insecurities/hunger/shaming
- Discussion of language to insert in the amendment
- Intern will draw up language to bring to Legislative Council

Rep. Pyle closed the meeting on HB 1413 at 3:30 pm.

Bev Monroe, Committee Clerk

2021 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1413
2/8/2021

To provide an appropriation to the department of public instruction to provide grants to schools for breakfast and lunch for students

10:27 AM

Chairman Owens called the hearing on HB 1413.

Present: Reps. Owens, Schreiber-Beck, Heinert, Hoverson, D. Johnson, M. Johnson, Longmuir, Marschall, Pyle, Richter, Simons, Zubke, Guggisberg and Hager present.

Rep. Hager moved Amendment 02003, seconded by **Rep. Guggisberg**.
Voice vote. Motion carried. #5869

Rep. Pyle moved **Do Pass as Amended**, seconded by Rep. Hager.

Roll call vote:

Representatives	Vote
Representative Mark S. Owens	Y
Representative Cynthia Schreiber-Beck	Y
Representative Ron Guggisberg	Y
Representative LaurieBeth Hager	Y
Representative Pat D. Heinert	Y
Representative Jeff A. Hoverson	N
Representative Dennis Johnson	Y
Representative Mary Johnson	Y
Representative Donald Longmuir	Y
Representative Andrew Marschall	N
Representative Brandy Pyle	Y
Representative David Richter	Y
Representative Luke Simons	N
Representative Denton Zubke	Y

Motion carried. 11 – 3 – 0 Rep. Pyle is carrier.

Chairman Owens closed the meeting on HB 1413 at 10:32 AM.

Bev Monroe, Committee Clerk by Anna Fiest

JP
2/3/21

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL NO. 1413

Page 1, line 1, after "A BILL" replace the remainder of the bill with "for an Act to provide for a legislative management study regarding public school nutritional resources.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY - PUBLIC SCHOOL NUTRITIONAL RESOURCES.

1. During the 2021-22 interim, the legislative management shall consider studying public school nutritional resources, including the potential options of providing breakfast or lunch, free of charge, for all public school students. The study must include:
 - a. An evaluation of the usage, participation, and effectiveness of the federal free and reduced lunch program for students attending public schools in the state;
 - b. A review of the cost of living, income and poverty guidelines across districts and regions of the state, and other factors the legislative management deems appropriate;
 - c. A comparison of North Dakota laws and other state laws regarding school nutritional services and funding;
 - d. A review of the potential to use local and state products in school lunch programs and public-private partnerships; and
 - e. A review of the stigma associated with participating in the free and reduced lunch program and investigate opportunities to address hunger and food insecurity of students attending public school in the state.
2. The legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the sixty-eighth legislative assembly."

Renumber accordingly

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

HB 1413: Education Committee (Rep. Owens, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS AS FOLLOWS** and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (11 YEAS, 3 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1413 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

Page 1, line 1, after "A BILL" replace the remainder of the bill with "for an Act to provide for a legislative management study regarding public school nutritional resources.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY - PUBLIC SCHOOL NUTRITIONAL RESOURCES.

1. During the 2021-22 interim, the legislative management shall consider studying public school nutritional resources, including the potential options of providing breakfast or lunch, free of charge, for all public school students. The study must include:
 - a. An evaluation of the usage, participation, and effectiveness of the federal free and reduced lunch program for students attending public schools in the state;
 - b. A review of the cost of living, income and poverty guidelines across districts and regions of the state, and other factors the legislative management deems appropriate;
 - c. A comparison of North Dakota laws and other state laws regarding school nutritional services and funding;
 - d. A review of the potential to use local and state products in school lunch programs and public-private partnerships; and
 - e. A review of the stigma associated with participating in the free and reduced lunch program and investigate opportunities to address hunger and food insecurity of students attending public school in the state.
2. The legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the sixty-eighth legislative assembly."

Renumber accordingly

21.0873.02003
Title.

Prepared by the Legislative Council staff for
House Education Committee
February 2, 2021

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO HOUSE BILL NO. 1413

Page 1, line 1, after "A BILL" replace the remainder of the bill with "for an Act to provide for a legislative management study regarding public school nutritional resources.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

SECTION 1. LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY - PUBLIC SCHOOL NUTRITIONAL RESOURCES.

1. During the 2021-22 interim, the legislative management shall consider studying public school nutritional resources, including the potential options of providing breakfast or lunch, free of charge, for all public school students. The study must include:
 - a. An evaluation of the usage, participation, and effectiveness of the federal free and reduced lunch program for students attending public schools in the state;
 - b. A review of the cost of living, income and poverty guidelines across districts and regions of the state, and other factors the legislative management deem appropriate;
 - c. A comparison of North Dakota laws and other state laws regarding school nutritional services and funding;
 - d. A review of the potential to use local and state products in school lunch programs and public-private partnerships; and
 - e. A review of the stigma associated with participating in the free and reduced lunch program and investigate opportunities to address hunger and food insecurity of students attending public school in the state.
2. The legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the sixty-eighth legislative assembly."

Renumber accordingly

2021 SENATE EDUCATION

HB 1413

2021 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee
Room JW216, State Capitol

HB 1413
3/8/2021

Provide for a legislative management study regarding public school nutritional resources,
--

Chair Schaible opened hearing at 3:31 PM.

Discussion Topics:

- Embarrassed students
- Student lunch debt
- National School Lunch Program history

Senator	Attendance
Chairman Schaible	P
Senator Elkin	P
Senator Conley	P
Senator Lemm	P
Senator Oban	P
Senator Wobbema	P

Rep Hager – introduced the bill

Nick Archuleta – ND United – testified in support #7809

Ben Tucker, St Thomas, ND – testified in support #7991

Landis Larson, ND AFL-CIO – testified in support #7720

Karen Ehrens, Bismarck – testified in support #7936

Additional written testimony:

Amanda Ihmels – support #7927

Adjourned at 3:56 PM

Lynn Wolf, Committee Clerk

*Great Public Schools**Great Public Service*

Testimony on HB 1413
Senate Education Committee
March 8, 2021

Chairman Schaible and members of the Committee, for the record my name is Nick Archuleta, and I am the president of North Dakota United. I rise today in support of HB 1413 and to urge a DO PASS recommendation.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of HB 1413 because this bill, in its original form, shone a bright light on an issue of great importance: hungry kids. Educators from across state recognize that kids come to school hungry in unexpected numbers. They also know that that these children show up to learn hungry every day through no fault of their own. They also know the educational challenges encountered by hungry kids are very real and difficult to overcome.

For many parents, writing a check to pay for school meals is as natural as breathing in and out. However, for numerous parents, whose financial reality has been negatively impacted by COVID or other economic factors, that simple act has turned into an inflection point; do they pay for school meals or divert that money to pay the rent? Or to keep the lights on? Or to pay for prescription medicine? Or to pay the mortgage? Or to make the car payment?

What we have seen lately is that students have been "lunch shamed." When a student's account has run out of money, he or she is allowed a meal different than his or her classmates. Usually, it is a peanut butter sandwich and a carton of milk. Worse yet, these students often must go to a separate table to pick up their lunches, adding to the stigma they experience through no fault of their own. In some communities, we have heard reports in recent years that students with a negative balance in their meal accounts have been denied the opportunity to attend prom, participate in school sponsored events, or even walk across the stage to receive their diplomas. As these unnecessarily punitive actions have been exposed, school districts have changed their policies, and that is a very good thing. However, the underlying issue remains and that is, I believe, what the sponsors of the bill have endeavored to address.

As this information has become more widely known, communities have rallied to help eliminate lunch debt. ND United member Jason Boynton and others organized Lunch Aid in Fargo to help retire the lunch debt of students. While this help is welcome and important, it is just a band-aid on an open wound because the day a student's lunch debt is retired, it starts all over again because the underlying causes have not been addressed.



Great Public Schools

Great Public Service

While there is ample anecdotal evidence of the issue of student hunger, Mr. Chairman and member of the Committee, there is still much to learn about the causes and pervasive effects of student hunger on the children we educate in North Dakota. That is why ND United supports HB 1413. I would respectfully urge this Committee to consider amending this bill. I believe this bill would be better if, on line 6, the words, "*consider studying*," were replaced with the word, "*study*."

With that, Chairman Schaible, I am happy to stand for any questions.

HB 1413**North Dakota Senate Committee on Education**

Chairman Schaible, Vice Chairman Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Ben Tucker. I am a farmer from St. Thomas, North Dakota in Pembina County. I represent no one except myself. I come before you today in support of HB 1413.

I am a grandfather. I love my grandchildren very much.

A couple years ago, my granddaughter came home from her Grand Forks elementary school with a stamp on her hand informing my daughter that they were behind on the Hot Lunch bill. The cafeteria staff calls this The Stamp Of Shame.

Fortunately, Ella (my granddaughter) was too young to be embarrassed by The Stamp Of Shame. Her classmates were still too young to tease her about the stamp. Ella thought the stamp was cool.

I did not think the stamp was cool. My daughter makes a good living and had just forgotten about the lunch bill; much as I used to do when my kids were in school. Back then, in my small town, I just got a call from the school office.

I was mad at Grand Forks. I was mad because no child should be embarrassed in front of their classmates. It wasn't just my granddaughter. No child is responsible for paying bills. No child is responsible for filling out Free And Reduced paperwork. It is never the child's fault. Ever. Yet it is the child that faces ridicule and embarrassment.

I was so mad that I went to a few Grand Forks School Board meetings and got them to reconsider using The Stamp Of Shame in their elementary schools. Since then, I've continued to keep up with the issue.

I've learned that lots of schools have high school kids who skip lunch rather than risk getting a peanut butter sandwich with a glass of water in front of their peers. I've learned that schools no longer use peanut butter and have gone to soy-butter. I've learned that some high school students from poor families always skip lunch because they don't want another bill coming to the house and never tell their parents. I've learned from school administrators that unpaid lunch bills would be a minor problem if they could just get everyone to fill out the Free And Reduced paperwork. I've learned that cafeteria staff hates stamping a child or not feeding a child. I've learned that some schools will dump a full tray of food into a large garbage can right in front of the child rather than feed a kid whose parents are behind on the lunch bill. And make no mistake...it's the parents who are behind on the bill and not the child because children aren't responsible for paying bills.

I've also learned that hungry students don't learn very well, but that was never my motivation. My motivation has always been treating children well because it's not their fault.

What I haven't learned is the best way to deal with this problem. It is a problem. If you want a child to hate school forever, just embarrass them in front of their peers.

House Bill 1413 began as an ambitious bill to simply feed all of the school children. Period. Because it came with a very large fiscal note in times of tight budgets, it would have been easy for the House Education Committee to stamp it Do NOT Pass and easy for the House to kill it. That, however, did not happen.

The House Education Committee saw that problems exist. They realized that we can do better. There must be ways to feed hungry school children. There must be ways to avoid making children hate school, some of whom desperately need education as a path to a better life. Yet the question remains: What is the best path forward?

I do not know the answer to that question, but I do know that the key word is "forward". We, as a state, need to study this problem. Maybe the best answers are small and simple like figuring out a way to get the paperwork filled out or to expand the Free And Reduced program. Maybe the answer is to just feed every child. Maybe the best answers are already being implemented in other states.

We don't even know the scope of the problem. My wife teaches 4th grade and I can tell you that she used to have students missing lunch every single year so it's not a small problem. She doesn't anymore because, since our granddaughter got that stamp, we pay every delinquent lunch bill in her class. Kris is a great 4th grade teacher and I will not tolerate one her students have what should be a great year of learning ruined by some stupid hand stamp or an embarrassing soy-butter sandwich.

Members of the Senate Committee on Education, HB 1413 is not a call to action. It is merely a step forward to see the scope of the problem and give you options to improve our state's education program. The only logical reason to vote Do Not Pass is that you don't believe that there is a problem. I stand before you as a witness and my testimony is that we do have a problem. I got up early and put on a suit and drove a long way to tell you that in person. I have a long drive home facing me, but I would be glad to answer any questions.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for your time, your attentiveness and your public service.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bennet B. Tucker", with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Bennet B. Tucker

St. Thomas ND

3/8/2021



North Dakota AFL-CIO

1323 East Front Ave.

Bismarck ND 58504

llarson@ndaflcio.org

701-526-8787

**Testimony of Landis Larson, ND AFL-CIO President
In Support of HB 1413
March 8, 2021**

Chairperson Schaible and members of the Senate Education Committee:

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 1413.

The North Dakota AFL-CIO fully supports providing all North Dakota public school children with no-cost meals as a basic part of their education.

Over the last few years, our federation has really taken an interest in the basic importance of all working families to have access to nutritious food, something made even more challenging by the pandemic. As a federation of labor unions, we have worked to raise thousands of dollars for our food banks and participated in efforts to raise money to alleviate school lunch debt in school districts around the state. We believe that this bill is the surest, simplest way to solve the problem of school lunch debt as well as ensuring that all our students have the nutrition they need to learn and thrive while under our care at school.

We also know that times have been very difficult for many working families with school age kids in North Dakota, and thankfully the federal government stepped in to ensure that all kids could access school meals during the pandemic. We know that has saved many working families hundreds of dollars each month that would have otherwise been spent on food, allowing them to pay bills and meet their other pressing financial obligations. We think that this savings to working families would be beneficial going forward, and believe that this is an important investment in the future of our state.

I recommend a "Do Pass" on House Bill 1413.

Respectfully Submitted,
Landis Larson
North Dakota AFL-CIO President

Karen K. Ehrens, RD, LRD
Testimony HB 1431
March 8, 2021

Chair Schaible and Members of the Education Committee:

Good day. I am Karen Ehrens, a Licensed Registered Dietitian, and a person who works to reduce hunger in our state and our communities.

Getting enough food every day for a healthy and active lifestyle (food security) is extremely important for all North Dakotans, and especially for children. Children are our future. Children who do not have food security (food insecurity) are at least twice as likely to report being in fair or poor health. Food insecurity in children is associated with poor educational performance and academic outcomes and with mental health and behavioral health challenges.¹ Food at school served at lunch, breakfast, or healthful snacks is a vital source of healthful food for North Dakota's children.

Over the past year, access to food for every one of us has been challenged. For families living with few resources, and at or near the poverty level, have been especially challenged to find enough food every day for their families. The U.S. Census Bureau has been conducting weekly online surveys studying how the coronavirus pandemic is impacting households across the country from a social and economic perspective. This Household Pulse Survey has uncovered that specifically to North Dakota, in April – July, 2020, one-third to one-half of adults with children in their families reported recent food insufficiency in the week prior to answering the survey. Families with children who reported food insufficiency and obtained free groceries or meal(s) relied heavily on food provided by schools; for 7/10 weeks, 50 - 90% of families found food at school or other programs aimed at children.²

Organizations and agencies are responding to unprecedented food needs deepened and widened by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic stresses. School foodservice personnel have been adapting rapidly, with flexibility, creativity and hard work to meet the different ways in which education is being delivered, whether that is in-person, at distance, or a hybrid of those ways. School meals prepared and served to children are available at no charge from nearly every North Dakota school with the support of federal funding and waivers through June 30, 2021.

Other examples of how North Dakota organizations and agencies have stepped up to meet food needs CARES Act funding that helped increase cold-holding infrastructure (freezers and coolers) for 83 food pantries and rural grocery stores and funds to help four retailers across 6 locations accept and process online grocery ordering. Senior meals providers received extra federal funding to cover additional costs of packaging for meals picked up or delivered. Many people started or expanded gardens to grow their own food and to share the harvest with others. Food boxes and additional federal funding, along with donations from individuals and the private sector, boosted amounts of food available through the charitable feeding networks that include food pantries and soup kitchens. Volunteers have stepped up in these uncertain times to help get food to people's hands. Federal funding has increased SNAP monthly amounts for many who receive it, and Pandemic EBT benefits were made available to families with children when school was not in session. These efforts across the spectrum have reached many people, and all have played a role in keeping people from hunger and food insecurity.

Even with these efforts, however, the latest data available from the Census Household pulse survey in December, 2020 estimate that 14- 15 percent of adults in households with children in North Dakota reported that they “sometimes” or “often” did not have enough to eat in the week prior to answering the survey.³ Food from schools and other programs aimed at children continue to be the most-accessed resources for households with children to find food help.

Creative solutions are welcomed and needed to ensure that the most vulnerable among us, our children, have enough to eat now and into the future past the pandemic. Ensuring that all the children in our care in the state of North Dakota have enough to eat is a basic minimum that should and can be provided. Schools can continue to be trusted and available partners to get food to children when they have adequate support for all the people and resources needed to provide vital school meals: food service personnel with adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) and wages; food to serve, equipment to store, prepare and serve food during school the school day; and the ability to cover the expenses for doing so. A first step would be to study the many issues that impact the payment for and foods used in school meal programs; it would be a plus to determine how to serve more North Dakota foods to North Dakota students.

Experience and research have shown that nourishing food is essential to learning and as an integral part of the school day for all children, just as are books, desks, computers, and the things we assume are necessary for learning. Many advocacy groups including pediatricians, public health workers, teachers groups, nutrition organizations and even the national School Nutrition Association are advocating for Universal School Meals. Universal School Meals, or meals as an integrated part of the school day not singled out as a separate fee for families, can bring many benefits to students, schools, and our society. Food for school children is an worthy investment with dividends of healthier children with improved learning.

References:

1. *The Impact of Poverty, Food Insecurity, and Poor Nutrition on Health and Well-Being*, Food Research & Action Center , December 2017. Accessed at <https://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/hunger-health-impact-poverty-food-insecurity-health-well-being.pdf>
2. *North Dakota Families are Facing Food Hardship During the COVID-19 Pandemic* Issue Brief Analysis by K. Ehrens with support from ND Compass. <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey.html>
http://hungerfreend.org/image/cache/ND_Families_Face_Food_Hardship_Pulse_Survey_COVID_July_2020_pdf.pdf
3. Household Pulse Survey Data Tables, accessed 1.25.2021 at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html>



Chairman Schaible and Senate Education Committee,

I am Amanda Ihmels, a Registered Dietitian residing in Bismarck and the current president of the North Dakota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (NDAND). NDAND represents approximately 250 Registered Dietitians in the state and several of those working in school nutrition.

I am writing in support of bill 1413. NDAND supports studying the impact of providing meals to public school students. We feel that investigating the possibility of providing reduced cost or free meals to some or all students would benefit the community. Schools with healthy meals provide a broad range of benefits to the students and schools. This [link](#) is for 10 Key Findings on the Impact of School Nutrition Programs.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Amanda Ihmels, RDN, CSO, LRD
President of the North Dakota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2020-2021
aihmels@bismarckcancercenter.com
701.516.2551

2021 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee
Room JW216, State Capitol

HB 1413
3/9/2021

A BILL for an Act to provide for a legislative management study regarding public school nutritional resources.

Chair Schaible called to order at 10:17 AM

Discussion Topics:

- Committee Work

Sen Wobbema requested not to act on this bill today.

Senator	Attendance
Chairman Schaible	P
Senator Elkin	P
Senator Conley	P
Senator Lemm	P
Senator Oban	P
Senator Wobbema	P

Adjourned at 10:22 AM

Lynn Wolf, Committee Clerk

2021 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee
Room JW216, State Capitol

HB 1413
3/16/2021

A BILL for an Act to provide for a legislative management study regarding public school nutritional resources.

Chair Schaible called to order at 10:07 AM

Discussion Topics:

- Committee Work

Sen Conley moved a **Do Not Pass**

Sen Wobbema seconded

Roll Call Vote: 5-Yeas; 1-Nay; 0-AB Motion Passed

Sen Schaible will carry the bill.

Adjourned at 10:13 AM

Lynn Wolf, Committee Clerk

Senator	Attendance
Chairman Schaible	P
Senator Elkin	P
Senator Conley	P
Senator Lemm	P
Senator Oban	P
Senator Wobbema	p

HB 1413	Vote
Chairman Schaible	Y
Senator Elkin	Y
Senator Conley	Y
Senator Lemm	Y
Senator Oban	N
Senator Wobbema	y

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

HB 1413, as engrossed: Education Committee (Sen. Schaible, Chairman) recommends **DO NOT PASS** (5 YEAS, 1 NAY, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). Engrossed HB 1413 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar.