

Dear Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify pertaining to HB 1200. My name is Tim Godfrey and I'm the superintendent of Kenmare Public Schools. I'd like to start by echoing something my father used to say. I hate paying taxes but can stomach it as long as my money is going towards something that makes our lives better. There isn't much argument that educating our children is one of those things.

When I look at HB 1200, I get further frustrated with the direction of public education. In North Dakota, we have heard the catch phrase "local control" echoed over and over again.

Unfortunately, as an educational leader, I feel that local control has been stripped from us steadily over the years. We have locally elected officials to determine policy and the direction of our school districts. This includes levying taxes on our stakeholders to ensure the effective and efficient operation of our educational program. HB 1200 erodes the ability of these individuals to appropriately do this very thing.

Please take into consideration the annual increases we face each year in teacher and staff salaries and benefits. As it stands now, we are barely able to keep up with inflationary costs when it comes to supporting healthy teacher salaries. This in turn makes it harder to hire and retain high caliber educators. Also, two years ago, Kenmare School district was faced with an 18% increase in medical insurance costs. That increase in cost amounted to several thousands of dollars. As a small rural school district, we don't have the flexibility in our budget to accommodate such a cost without having control over the amount of taxes we are able to levy. And this is just one instance in the fluctuation of expenses for us. We suffered last year with a decrease in transportation revenue due to COVID19. But our expenses for this year's transportation costs will not decrease. How do we make up for this? By using our general

revenue to offset the expense. Kind of a rob Peter to pay Paul scenario. In the end, something will suffer. Whether it be staffing, much needed curriculum, or materials and supplies to support our students' academic and social/emotional well-being.

Besides all the obvious reasons for not supporting HB 1200, please consider the fact that the way this bill is written, it seems convoluted and overly complicated. The current ability for a locally elected school board to approve up to a 12% increase in general fund revenue has adequately supported our ability to educate our children. I feel confident that decreasing that to 2% will negate all we've been able to do and will undermine the ability of North Dakota public schools to educate our children in a way that prepares them for success in their futures.