



1 HB1200 – Property Tax limitations on school districts –

2 NDCEL Testimony

3 Good morning Chairman Headland and members of the Finance and Taxation committee. For the
4 record, my name is Dr. Aimee Copas. I am the Executive Director for the ND Council of
5 Educational Leaders. NDCEL works with our ND School leaders and administrators such as -
6 Superintendents, Business Officials, Principals, Technology Leaders, and most all others in the
7 school building except our teachers and school board members.

8 We are here today to express concern about HB 1200 and to share with your committee information
9 that may make you agree with this position regarding the negative position this would put school
10 districts in and the state in from a fiscal standpoint.

11 HB 1200 is bringing to this committee a similar bill that this legislative body has seen for several
12 sessions. While I understand full well the positive intent of this bill to save taxpayers money, the
13 reality is that it may – or may NOT do just that. Furthermore, it erodes the authority of another
14 group of elected officials that have a very real duty and job to perform, and that is our locally
15 elected school boards. This bill effectively limits the boards rightful authority to establish their
16 local tax request with their patrons. School budget hearings are noticed and take place annually
17 and the opportunity is very appropriate to allow those local communities work out the amount they
18 wish to invest in their school.

19 When addressing the need to keep up with inflationary costs a district could potentially be tasked
20 with, bearing the potential additional expense of an annual vote to simply cover the cost of
21 operation without any unusual cost shifting in any way. This is an unfortunate and unnecessary
22 use of funds.

23 When we think about conservative ideals – we must consider how we manage through decisions.
24 It is possible that sponsors of this bill feel they are answering to the needs of their constituents or



1 of their own beliefs to put a desire to control taxable rates in front of local decision making. In an
2 effort to center more control in the capital, state lawmakers are restricting local elected officials’
3 ability to make local quality of life decisions. At the same time in policy committees there is a
4 deluge of bills before education each session (this one being no different) that often have a claim
5 to **not** have a fiscal note, but which ultimately do cost school districts money upon their
6 application. Local school boards must be able to respond and ensure those laws are applied and
7 that they can be afforded.

8 Last session we worked to partner with the legislature to put in place a plan that would bring ALL
9 districts onto the formula within 7 years. We must stay the course on this pathway to ensure equity.
10 Adjusting critical functions within the formula such as this one could derail the work done last
11 session. We strongly encourage this committee to recommend a do-not-pass on this bill.

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