

1 HB1350 – Approval of School District Bonds

2 Williams County School District #8 – David Goetz Testimony

3 Good morning Chairman Headland and members of the Finance and Taxation committee. For the
4 record, my name is David Goetz. I am fortunate to serve as the Superintendent of Williams County
5 School District #8. I am writing today to urge you to give HB 1350 a Do Pass recommendation.

6 I may have only been with Williams County School District #8 school system for a little over 6
7 months but in that time, I have learned a lot through the Reorganization Process. Many times, I
8 heard from taxpayers talking about how we need new schools. The community has grown over the
9 last several years creating a shortage of space for students. I heard how the district went to the
10 public many times to find out what was needed to pass a bond for our kids. Now if the bonds would
11 have failed by less than 50%, I would say they did not do their duty to listen to the public. The
12 problem is these bonds failed with 54% to 58% approval from the public. Since these bonds needed
13 60% approval, they did not pass. This has left our kids in portable classrooms.

14 Now you may think portable classrooms are still educating our kids, and they are. The part that
15 most people do not see is portable classrooms are not a long-term solution. First the rooms are
16 smaller, so in our time of need for “social distancing” we do not have enough room to spread out.
17 Portable classrooms are cheaply made, compared to “brick and mortar”, creating safety issues
18 when used for long-term solutions. When teaching in a portable classroom and someone walks
19 down the hall, you hear every footstep this person takes. The walls are thin and from time-to-time
20 students can hear classroom instruction from a neighboring classroom. These are just two
21 classroom distractions associated with portable classrooms which takes away from student
22 learning time. I know this is not the only challenge we are faced with to educate our students. I am
23 just simply saying it is an easily prevented distraction and safety concern that could have been
24 prevented in many districts.

25 I know that I could talk about several other reasons, but I would like to finish with a totally different
26 approach. I want to look at the Reorganization that just passed between Williston Public School
27 District #1 and Williams County School District #8. As you all may know, reorganizing a school

1 district is not a small deal. After going through the process, I would have to say it is going to make
2 a much larger impact on the two districts than passing any bond would have. I am not going to get
3 into the details of why I say that. The point I am trying to make is if the reorganization would have
4 required 60% approval of the public to pass, the reorganization would NOT have passed.

5 I believe the intent of the 60% threshold was to protect landowners in rural districts as these people
6 pay a disproportional share of the cost of school construction when a school is built. HB 1350
7 addresses this issue in several ways. First it still requires a super-majority of 55% approval for
8 any school bond referendum, which is a middle ground position that respects both perspectives.
9 Second it maintains the 60% threshold for districts with less than 4,000 residents to ensure rural
10 landowners continue to be protected.

11 Your predecessors in the ND Legislature understood the need for the type of language in HB
12 1350. NDCC 57-15-14 sets different thresholds for passing a school district excess levy based on
13 the population of the school district. I urge you to follow the precedent they have set and give HB
14 1350 a DO PASS recommendation. Thank You, and I plan to be present at the hearing if you have
15 any questions.