

Dr. Matthew Lonn Testimony to Senate Education Committee

Chairman Schaible and members of the Senate Education Committee, I speak to you today on behalf of North Dakota's Center for Distance Education (NDCDE, CDE). For the record, I am Dr. Matthew Lonn, Director at the Center for Distance Education.

CDE is in support of HB1232. CDE would also support any additional amendments that allow districts the flexibility to leverage full time virtual programs (not just during weather emergencies) for their students and still be able to count those students as active attendees in their district.

We are all aware of the important role that digital education has played during the pandemic. However, it is important to remember that students, parents, and schools have been leveraging the digital delivery of learning opportunities with greater regularity for many years now. Quality digital curriculum and instruction have made significant strides during that time. One of the greatest indicators is that successful completion rates for K-12 students learning online continue to rise nearly surpassing 85%.

As we know, there is overwhelming research that not all students learn best with the same instructional methods nor at the same pace. By allowing districts the flexibility and local control to provide students the option to learn fully online, they can provide additional learning choice to help more kids be successful.

It is important to note that with nearly 30% of districts reporting so far on this years required annual online clearinghouse survey, slightly over 33% have indicated that they would like the ability to offer a virtual academy for students in their district. If this becomes a representative sample, that means that approximately 60 of the states 175 districts would like to offer full time virtual options for some of their students. That could equate to greater choice and control over their learning for thousands of kids.

Thank you for your time. I will now stand for any questions.

Dr. Matthew Lonn, State Director
North Dakota Center for Distance Education