

TESTIMONY REGARDING NUTRITION EDUCATION EFFORTS
STATE BOARD OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EDUCATION
JANUARY 12, 2018

Good morning Chairman Peltier and members of the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education. My name is Michelle Dever and I am a school nurse with Bismarck Public Schools.

One of my roles as a school nurse is to provide wellness education to staff and students to proactively encourage healthy, active lifestyles. This is a vital role because childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years and we have an obesity issue in ND that needs to be addressed. The most recent Bismarck/Mandan Community Health Needs Assessment showed:

- 72.3% of respondents were either overweight or obese on the BMI scale
- Only 5.1% of respondents are consuming the recommended 5 or more servings of fruit and vegetables in a day

NDSU Extension in Burleigh County has partnered with Bismarck Public School Nurses to influence over 12,000 students in Bismarck and Burleigh County for the past 10 years. I am fortunate to have been a part of this relationship from the beginning. These extension agents have been able to provide us with superb, impactful educational programs and materials we can utilize with our students. They are professional, well educated, polished experts in the areas of health, nutrition, and food safety.

One of the nutrition/wellness educational programs they provide us is a program designed and initiated by NDSU Extension called *On the Move to Better Health*. *On the Move* has been recognized nationally for the impact it is having on ND residents. Over the 10 year stretch that this program has been used, over 22,000 ND children and their families have participated.

We know that this program works because we have data that supports it. Burleigh County post-surveyed children who participated in the *On the Move* program in the 2016/2017 school year and it showed the following results:

- 47% consumed more dairy
- 51% drank less pop
- 49% chose healthier snacks
- 57% increased daily physical activity
- 46% ate more fruits and vegetables
- 59% drank more water

These results are consistent with previous school years the curriculum was provided. Research has shown us that improving health behaviors in elementary school has a large impact on quality of life and health status as these kids become adults in ND.

We also know improving health behaviors among kids affects their parents and caregivers at home. Post-surveys given to parents whose children participated in *On the Move* in the 2016/2017 school year showed:

- 81% read the newsletters
- 65% were provided with new information, ideas, and recipes
- 38% increased their fruit consumption
- 22% increased their vegetable consumption

I also have had the opportunity to work with NDSU Extension in a program called Smarter Lunchrooms Movement (SLM). SLM is dedicated to providing schools with the knowledge, motivation, and resources needed to build a lunchroom environment that makes healthy food choices the easy choice. Through my experience with SLM, I have watched kids drink more milk, try fruits and vegetables they have never had the opportunity to try, feel excited about eating healthy food, and celebrate this excitement with their peers. This is another movement with proven results of being impactful. The 2015/2016 school year showed a 19.4% increase in the number of servings of fruits and vegetables being consumed by our students.

Last month I submitted a grant with an NDSU Extension agent called *Tablet to Table*. If awarded, this grant will provide my school with 2 tablets that will display health information that is specific to what is being served that day for breakfast and lunch. Information could include health benefits of a featured food, facts about where that food was grown with a focus on ND products, advertisements for upcoming nutrition events like Try Day Fridays, and fruit and veggie information during our annual Fruit and Veggie Week. NDSU Extension will play an important role in helping us get the best information on these tablets to help educate our students and staff.

BPS school nurses are recognizing a need in helping these students diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes navigate through school safely and comfortably. I am working with a team of community members in Bismarck to help transition our students with diabetes through school smoothly so they can learn independence and confidence in their self-care. NDSU Extension has been invited to the table for this discussion because they can bring valuable research-based resources to improve this transition. We need them to continue to be a part of this discussion as this endeavor moves forward.

Health, nutrition, and food safety education is important in ND because it is impactful. We know that proactive health knowledge and practices drastically decrease health costs. The educational programs and services provided by NDSU Extension to the youth of our state will foster these youth to grow up to be healthy, happy, productive citizens of ND.

I love that this board is named the State Board of Agricultural Research and Education. This recognizes the need for not only great research done in the agricultural field, but also the role of education to put this information in the hands of our citizens. NDSU Extension plays an important role in this educational component. They can help connect families to make healthy choices from the great stuff the agricultural community is producing in ND. They need more resources to continue their important work, not less.

My role as a school nurse is changing. I'm seeing more complex health needs, which reduces the time available to provide nutritional education. This elucidates the important role that NDSU Extension plays in providing this key function. I'm asking for your support in continued funding for NDSU Extension and making it a priority so that North Dakota students can continue to benefit from this proactive education.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to share my thoughts with you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.