

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the record, my name is Bob Paulson, and I represent District 3 in Minot. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I'm here to submit House Bill 1467 for your consideration.

This bill addresses the issue of POD schooling, an alternative educational approach being used by parents around the nation where in-person learning is not available due to COVID, especially in situations where virtual learning is not going well for their children.

I had them put a New York Times article on LAWS for your information that addresses the high points of the model of POD schooling.

This idea was brought to me after session had already begun, and after some brief research I thought it was worth a conversation with Superintendent Baesler. I met with her and members of her staff, and she gave the concept a favorable review as being potentially beneficial for North Dakota students. She graciously offered to have members of her staff, Mr. Joe Kolosky and Mr. Jim Upgren work with Legislative Council to draft the language that you see before you today. I greatly appreciate their efforts.

One example that might help define the need for POD schooling is one where two working parents are faced with the decision of how to supervise the education of their children when in person learning is not available. Faced with the decision of who will quit their job to be able to supervise the children, and then wrestling with how to make ends meet when reduced to one income with a two income budget, the opportunity to coordinate and cooperate with other friends or neighbors in a similar situation could provide some relief to this untenable situation. If four families were able to join forces in this scenario, you now have potentially eight parents contributing, and the option of only taking one day off a week or perhaps even less becomes a real possibility.

These parents, depending upon their qualifications and comfort level, could personally supervise the education of the children, hire a tutor, hire a retired teacher or use video-based education.

Again, this situation is happening around the nation and each situation is unique. What this bill seeks to do is to provide a structure in North Dakota where parents have a specific set of guidelines to follow as they proceed. Parents need assurances that in choosing to work voluntarily with other parents to create group educational activities for their children, they will not trigger regulatory or other burdens upon themselves, their households, or their children.

While learning pods are not new, the heightened awareness and utilization of the idea could be something positive to come out of a very challenging experience of the pandemic.

Parents grouping together to help advance or supplement their children's education should be encouraged, applauded, and protected.

Mr. Chairman, I have submitted a friendly amendment for the committee's review, which can also be found on LAWS. Page 1 lines 13-15 amends the definition of parent, page 1 line 18 adds the word or so that it amends the bill to be effective during a state of emergency or when in person learning is not feasible, page 1 line 23 it includes the scenario for if a state of emergency is declared on only a county wide level, and finally on page 3 lines 10-12 it clarifies that this bill would not impact the ability of homeschool families to collaborate in their homeschooling effort.

Mr. Chairman, that is the bill, and I'm happy to take questions available to field questions on the specific language of the bill.