



Great Public Schools

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Testimony Before the Senate Judiciary Committee
HB 1205
March 13, 2023

Chairwoman Larson and members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Nick Archuleta, and I am the president of North Dakota United. ND United is a union of 11,500 members dedicated to public service. On their behalf, I urge the Committee to urge a do not pass recommendation for HB 1205.

North Dakota United has no doubt that the intentions of the sponsors of this bill are honorable. Our members unanimously agree that all children should be shielded from negative influences like pornographic and violent themed materials that are not appropriate for specific age groups (I'll note here that this bill is silent on the issue of violence). We also believe, however, that the state should not be dictating what adults can read, or what they can research.

Madam Chair and member of the Committee, HB 1205 serves as a vehicle to circumvent policies that are already in place in communities across North Dakota designed to remove books from, or add books to, library collections. These policies are in place to look at issues as they arise. In contrast, HB 1205 initiates a sweeping overreach that usurps the carefully considered and crafted policies created at the local level. In our view, and in the view of North Dakotans of every political stripe who believe in local control, the state should respect the decisions made closest to the people who must live by them.

Public libraries have historically been American institutions at which we and our fellow citizens have read, researched, and relaxed. Public libraries have served as safe places for Americans to explore the world around them through the written word, computerized code, and visually through film and movies. In short, libraries-be they public, school, or university-have allowed all citizens of ND to expand their horizons and continue their education, be it formally or informally. Our outstanding and beloved librarians have dedicated their lives to spreading the love of reading and lifetime learning.



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Chair Larson and members of the Committee, legislation like that before you today, usurps the authority of local librarians and their boards to administer their community libraries and, intentionally or not, devalues their important work. Though HB 1205 may have come from a place of good intention, it ultimately undermines local control and should be defeated. To that end, I respectfully urge a do not pass recommendation for HB 1205.