

Chair Heinert and Members of the Committee,

My name is Theresa Deckert and I am the former office administrator of the North Dakota Home School Association (NDHSA). During my years in that position I answered the phone and guided parents as they searched for new educational opportunities for their children. Maybe they needed a change because of a special need that was not being met, bullying from another student, or quite often, a mental health crisis was the reason to seek an alternative to public, classroom education.

As I would interview a parent to best assess what to recommend in their unique circumstance, it often became clear that homeschooling as per North Dakota's current law was not an option. This may have been because of a parent's need to work, especially in the case of a single parent. Many times the caller would ask, "Can the child's grandparent homeschool them because they are a certified teacher" or "Can my friend or sister homeschool my child along with her own?"

I had to unfortunately tell them no. This was especially a problem during Covid shutdowns. Many of these families simply decided to get together with other families and take turns teaching. These were termed "pod schools". They operated during covid – whether legal or not, it happened and that is past.

For these reasons I feel HB 1472, allowing for microschools is needed in our state to let parents who maybe don't feel able to homeschool give their children that opportunity through the use of microschools.

As this bill was being written I was contacted by the writers about having this added to the homeschool statute which is current law. I discouraged that as the NDHSA sees this as an entirely different mode of education though having similarities. My experience shows that schools often get confused about the application of the Century Code relating to home education. Because microschools are a unique approach to education, they need to be under a separate statute mostly for clarification to school districts.

So for those reasons I would encourage a "do pass" on HB 1472. I would be happy to answer any questions if a legislator desires to reach out to me.

Sincerely,
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