

## **Argument Against HB1609: The Danger of Lowering Legal Standards**

My name is Morgan R. Glines. I am a practicing attorney and owner of my own firm in Minot, the alternate municipal judge in Minot, Ward County Bar President, and a member on the board for the Women's Legal Section. I, along with my other fellow practicing attorneys in this great state, have dedicated years of our life to study and have continued with our education and studies decades into our practice for the betterment of our clients. This is not an easy career choice, as we tend to see people at some of the lowest times in their life. However, we have the training to take a comprehensive look at their needs and help them through, which is not as simple as just drafting something up and submitting it to the court. One case may take years to complete.

HB 1609 is a reckless proposal that would fundamentally undermine the integrity of the legal profession by allowing individuals to become attorneys through a mere apprenticeship. This bill ignores the rigorous education and calibration required to produce competent lawyers and threatens the quality of legal services available to the public.

### **The Problem with Legal Apprenticeships**

The practice of law is complex and multifaceted, requiring deep knowledge across various disciplines, from constitutional law to contract disputes. Legal education serves as a calibration process, ensuring that every lawyer meets a standard level of competence before they are entrusted with the power and responsibility of legal representation.

Under HB 1609, an apprentice's education would be dictated entirely by their mentor. What if the mentor specializes only in criminal defense, and the apprentice is never exposed to real estate transactions, family law, or corporate litigation? A licensed attorney must be prepared to practice in any area of law, yet this bill allows someone trained in only one narrow field to become a general practitioner. This raises serious concerns about preparedness and legal malpractice.

### **What does an Apprentice Even Do?**

In traditional legal education, students are trained through rigorous coursework, legal research, moot courts, and practical externships designed to expose them to a broad range of legal issues. The apprenticeship model lacks any standardization: What are the benchmarks for competency? Will apprentices be required to draft pleadings, write appellate briefs, or argue cases in a supervised setting? The bill does not specify, leaving the process open to abuse and inconsistency.

### **Legislatures Becoming Lawyers**

HB 1609 also includes an absurd provision allowing legislatures who have served two terms to become attorneys. This is the very definition of elitism: a select class of individuals who bypass the rigorous path that ordinary citizens must take.

A law degree and bar passage ensure that lawyers have demonstrated intellectual discipline and mastery of the law. Merely passing bills does not equate to legal proficiency. If lawmakers truly want to serve the public as attorneys, they should take the same path as everyone else – through accredited law schools and bar exams. Otherwise, this bill simply creates a privileged class of policymakers with legal authority they did not properly earn.

*The Inevitable Erosion of Legal Standards*

The legal profession is not one that allows for mediocrity. The risks to clients are too great. A poorly trained doctor can kill a patient, and a poorly trained lawyer can ruin a life. By removing the educational safeguards that ensure competency, HB 1609 is not an expansion of opportunity – it is a dangerous shortcut that will compromise the legal system.

For the sake of public trust, professional integrity, and competent legal representation, HB 1609 must be rejected.

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