



NDSBA
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HB 1160
Testimony of Amy De Kok
Senate Education Committee
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Chairman Beard and members of the Senate Education Committee, my name is Amy De Kok, and I am the Executive Director for the North Dakota School Boards Association (NDSBA). NDSBA represents all 168 public school districts and their governing boards. I am here in support of HB 1160, a bill that ensures local school boards retain control in adopting policies regarding cellphone use during instructional and noninstructional time. This legislation appropriately recognizes the unique needs of each school district and the importance of tailoring policies to reflect the priorities of students, parents, and educators within their communities.

HB 1160 strikes a critical balance between maintaining classroom order and allowing for the educational and personal needs of students. By empowering school boards to develop their own policies, this bill acknowledges that different communities face distinct challenges and opportunities when it comes to integrating technology into the learning environment. Instead of implementing a one-size-fits-all approach, HB 1160 ensures that each district can determine the best course of action in addressing cellphone use while still maintaining an appropriate level of structure and discipline in schools.

Additionally, this bill carefully includes necessary exceptions that recognize the importance of flexibility in addressing individual student needs. Specifically, the bill ensures that:

- **Medical accommodations** are met, allowing students who require the use of electronic devices for health-related purposes—such as continuous glucose monitoring or seizure alerts—to continue to have access, provided they present proper documentation.
- **Educational accommodations** are honored, ensuring students with individualized education programs (IEPs), Section 504 plans, and other specialized learning needs have access to necessary technological support.
- **Emergency situations** are addressed appropriately, allowing for the use of wireless communication devices when a student's health, safety, or well-being is at risk.

The bill also acknowledges the positive aspects of technology in education. Many educators incorporate digital tools into their instruction, and different learning strategies may necessitate controlled cellphone use. Allowing school districts the flexibility to shape policies that reflect the best instructional methods and student engagement strategies is an essential component of modern education.

I appreciate the Legislature's efforts to support local decision-making and recognize that schools should have the autonomy to establish policies that work best for their communities. HB 1160 provides a thoughtful framework that both upholds classroom discipline and ensures students receive the support they need.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support HB 1160 and issue a Do Pass recommendation. Thank you for your time and consideration.