

March 17, 2025

Senator Barta and Members of the Committee:

In North Dakota, we understand the value of herd immunity. Livestock owners will move heaven and earth to protect the herd, including the use of vaccinations.

For decades, herd immunity has protected people, too. Polio, smallpox and similar debilitating diseases had all but disappeared thanks to a significant majority of people having been vaccinated. Now, however, we are seeing the deadly reoccurrence of measles, beginning in Texas in areas with low vaccination rates. Do we really want what is happening in Texas to find its way to North Dakota thanks to HB 1391 and similar legislation?

HB 1391 is puzzling and contradictory. The addition of the amendment in Section 13 suggests that the bill's sponsors are fully cognizant of the dangers posed by communicable diseases in healthcare facilities. However, the amendment's sole focus on healthcare facilities begs the question: are communicable diseases less dangerous outside of hospitals and nursing homes? Are they not equally lethal in our daycare centers, schools, colleges and universities, businesses and churches? It is worth noting that in Texas, measles is the most rampant among school children, ages 5-17.

Finally, we must bear in mind one of the most important facets of achieving herd immunity: it protects the most vulnerable among us, those who for health reasons cannot receive a vaccination. This includes infants aged 0 to 12 months, and immuno-compromised individuals.

I implore the Committee to vote NO on this bill. We need to protect North Dakota's herd immunity, not weaken it. Let us not end up like Texas, New Mexico, and other states where lack of vaccinations has needlessly ushered in the reappearance of this deadly disease.

Thank you.

Debra Huber