

# Written Testimony in Opposition to House Bill N. 1220

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Chair Wobbema and Members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee,

I am grateful to Representative Motschenbacher and the co-sponsors of House Bill 1220 for their efforts to address North Dakota's workforce needs while reducing student debt and time to graduation.

However, I strongly oppose this bill because **cutting general education requirements for in-demand professions harms our local students by making them less competitive here in North Dakota against out-of-state peers**. I urge you to vote **NO** on HB 1220.

These points explain my opposition:

- HB 1220 allows “partial degrees” that skip general education courses required for a full bachelor's degree. These aren't “accelerated” or “compressed” degrees—they're incomplete.
- Partial degrees won't be recognized by national accrediting bodies or out-of-state licensing boards, as they lack the necessary general education courses.
- As a result, these partial-degrees would only be useful for students who have no intention of working outside of North Dakota.
- North Dakota colleges will still need to offer full, accredited degrees to attract out-of-state students who want career flexibility, as Rep. Motschenbacher himself has noted.
- Local students with partial degrees will compete for jobs against out-of-state graduates holding accredited degrees—and risk being overshadowed and outmatched.
  - Employers prefer candidates with critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills – which are gained from general education courses. (For evidence that bachelor's degree holders perform better, see Dr. Billie Madler's testimony, which cites research showing that hospitals with more nurses who completed general education courses have 10-30% lower patient mortality rates. This advantage applies to other professions too.)
- Even if there are enough jobs for all graduates, out-of-state graduates with full degrees will secure better-paying jobs and advancement opportunities, leaving North Dakota partial degree holders behind.
- Partial degree students will also face a bigger hurdle for career growth when pursuing a Master's degree—which is often required for salary increases and leadership roles.

They'll first need to complete the missing 30 credits of general education courses to earn a fully accredited degree before they're eligible for graduate programs.

- For context, since many Master's degrees are around 30-36 credits, this means North Dakota students with partial degrees will need to complete double the coursework and cost compared to out-of-state peers with accredited degrees, widening the gap as they advance their careers.

In short, HB 1220 harms North Dakota students by offering an inferior degree that weakens their future, leaving them less equipped to compete with out-of-state peers.

Even if offering partial degrees isn't mandatory, this bill permits a deceptive shortcut for the young men and women of North Dakota—our own sons and daughters—whom we're responsible for nurturing, serving, and protecting, jeopardizing their long-term success and stability.

I urge you to vote **NO**.

Sincerely,

David Echelbarger