

January 20, 2021

The Honorable JoNell Bakke
Grand Forks, ND 58201-3974

RE: SB 2186

Dear Senator Bakke:

My name is Thomas Warman, and I am the principal of Sawyer School, in Sawyer, ND. I am writing to you because I support SB 2186, but I was not able to attach a link for testimony at the committee hearing, although I was able to watch it.

In September of 2019, I received a tip that a plumber who was working in our school was a registered sex offender. A quick internet search confirmed this report, and the school was quietly placed in lockdown while the Ward County Sheriff's Department responded. As I later reflected, I thought about how many registered sex offenders can work in our schools and even in private homes where women and children are often home alone with plumbers, electricians, and other service professionals. I believe that this is a tragedy waiting to happen, and one we can prevent with stricter laws on background checks.

A few months after this, the Department of Defense began allowing veterans with disability ratings to have access to commissaries on military installations. As a veteran with a disability rating, I went to the Minot Air Force Base visitors center to learn how to take advantage of this opportunity. I was told that they would need to run a quick background check before I was allowed access, and this process took roughly 10-15 minutes. They were quickly able to see that there was nothing in my background that posed an imminent threat.

I realize that background checks in the state are behind, but I believe that these basic background checks that ensure people who have been convicted of crimes of violence, including sexual violence, and other crimes that current statutes would require registration as a sex offender are necessary. We must ensure that all people who work in schools and around children pose as little threat as possible.

Someone at the hearing testified that passing this law would reduce the amount of people in hard to fill jobs. Not only do I disagree with that argument, because these jobs are plentiful in North Dakota and probably rarely involve going into schools, but I also find this argument dangerous. I never want to have to tell a parent that their child was sexually assaulted in a school bathroom by anyone, let alone a worker who had a history of sexual violence, but was allowed entry to the school because no one could be bothered to check their background. The potential is there, and it scares me to death. If a quick background check can save one child, one family this heartache, I believe it is worth it. For this reason, I am in full support of SB 2186. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Thomas Warman
Minot, ND 58703