



521 E Main Avenue
Suite 320
Bismarck, ND 58501

Phone 701.255.6240
Toll Free 888.255.6240
Fax 701.255.1904

cawsnorthdakota.org
contact@cawsnorthdakota.org



House Bill No. 1144
House Education Committee
Testimony Presented by Seth O'Neill, JD, MSW
Email: soneill@cawsnorthdakota.org
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Chairman Heinert and members of the Committee, my name is Seth O'Neill and I am representing CAWS North Dakota in support of HB1144. CAWS North Dakota is the statewide coalition of the domestic violence and sexual assault programs in North Dakota. Our programs serve victims of sexual assault and domestic violence across the state.

We support this bill because it would require educators to annually certify their completion of a training for mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. This training is already in existence and can be found at mandatedreporter.pcand.org. The training provides an efficient refresher for mandated reporters on their responsibilities and requirements for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect.

As a former child protection social worker who received these reports of suspected child abuse or neglect, I know that a majority of reports come from educators. Educators are often the first line of defense against child abuse as they interact with a child on a daily basis. Child protection workers rely on educators to report suspected abuse or neglect. We believe that requiring educators to annually complete this simple training is an important step to ensure the safety of children in North Dakota.

We encourage the committee to give HB1256 a do pass recommendation. I appreciate your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.