

To whom it may concern:

I support a legislative management study regarding the impact the NDHSAA has on students in North Dakota. My own 3 sons have been negatively impacted more than once in the last 3 years alone due to hasty decisions made by the board, with no thought given on the impact such decisions would have on students' well-being.

In our experiences, the board has refused to communicate with parents and students, ignored phone calls, and broken promises to follow up or return calls. Discussion on a case by case basis is non-existent. All decisions are made in a cookie cutter fashion, with total disregard for individual students or individual situations.

In October of 2020, there were no hard and fast rules, laws, or by-laws to my knowledge regarding the unique situation covid presented. The way the board disregarded the student—athletes of the Sheyenne High Boys' Soccer Team, kicking them out of the State Tournament and accepting the Junior Varsity team to play in their place, and putting those students at high risk for injury playing at that level is shameful. The previous year, the State Tournament was postponed a week due to a blizzard, so we all knew it was possible to make that decision. But instead, the board opted only to do what was easiest for them, rather than keeping the entire tournament fair. The emotional pain of what was lost for those kids continues to linger, and it was entirely preventable.

During the fall of 2021, the West Fargo School District mishandled a student-athlete's home address, and this very same team was forced to forfeit two of their games in which this student played. The team was punished for the mistake of the school district, based on the decision of board.

Yet again, in October of 2022, the West Fargo School District failed to check the age eligibility of this very same team's roster before submitting it to the head coach at the beginning of the season. The week of the State Tournament, the school discovered their mistake that they had allowed a 20-year-old enrolled senior to play all season (his first time ever playing that sport, and was unaware of the age rule), and the board immediately forced the team to forfeit every single game of the entire season, thus disqualifying them from the tournament. Many of the kids this affected were the same kids affected for the third year in a row. You can imagine the lack of trust they now have in adults and those in administrative positions. Once again, the board punished the KIDS and coaches rather than the school district at fault, without any communication with parents or explanation of their hasty decision.

There absolutely must be a better way to serve students in this state. So much harm was caused here that was all preventable. The board does not appear to put students first, does not communicate well, does not have open dialogue, and is accountable to no one. Until there is accountability, the thing that most matters will never be put first – the well-being of students.

Thank you for your time. -Breanna Breidenbach