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HB 1337
House Education
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Testimony of Alexis Baxley

Good afternoon, Chairman Heinert, and members of the House Education Committee. My name is Alexis Baxley, and I serve as the executive director of the North Dakota School Boards Association. NDSBA represents the elected school boards of all 170 public school districts and several special education units in North Dakota.

NDSBA stands in opposition to HB 1337. Requiring a school district to spend 5 to 15 percent of their funding would be very burdensome to a district. While we all wish to make our districts as safe for our students as we possibly can, this bill is not the way to do it.

School districts already have the ability to levy an additional five mills – with a vote of their patrons – for specific safety uses. If funding is an issue for a district in regards to safety, this is a great option. However, I don't believe any districts have taken advantage of it since we adopted the provisions in 2019.

Requiring school districts to reserve funds for a specific purpose is a clear attack on the authority of locally elected school boards. It appears that this bill is an effort to force school districts into adopting a policy to allow conceal and carryon their property. Districts already have the ability to do so if they wish, and rather than restrict their funding, local patrons should work with their local school boards to encourage the adoption of such a policy if they believe it is right for their community.

Restricting funds in this way would have a significant impact on a district's ability to hire provide raises to non-certified staff, keep up with inflation costs of supplies and materials, fund transportation, and otherwise "keep the lights on."

I encourage you to give this bill a do-not-pass recommendation, and I will stand for any questions.