



# Heritage Middle School

March, 2023

Dear North Dakota Legislatures:

My name is Missy Kremer, and I am writing this letter of opposition for House Bill SB 2340. Currently, I am the instructional coach for the educators at Heritage Middle School in Horace, North Dakota, part of West Fargo Public Schools. Rounding close to fifteen years in public education as both a middle level educator and coach, I truly understand the importance of our school counselors.

Previously, I've worked in another school within our district which was considered a Title I school. Currently in my building, especially post 2020 school year, the mental health needs of our learners are greater than ever. We have received ESSR funds to put other roles in place to support our learners, but in my experience, no role can replace that of a trained school counselor. While other supports may help triage needs our learners have, a licensed school counselor, at the end of the day, is irreplaceable due to their level of training and expertise in meeting our learners where they are at to be successful in both school and life.

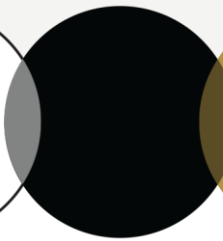
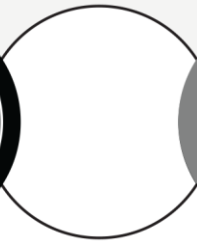
House Bill SB 2340 is insulting to the profession. While it is important to give schools as much support as possible, especially rural schools where finding staff may be harder, having the solution of letting other roles take the place of a licensed school counselor indefinitely is actually counter-productive. If our ultimate goal is to help learners create safe and healthy habits, a licensed school counselor is the only truly qualified resource within our buildings to get learners the exact support they may need.

Even if other mental health professionals are being hired to fill these open positions, students are ultimately not receiving comprehensive student support services provided by school counselors and school counseling programs, as those filling in are not trained in these areas. Additionally, students will be missing out on vital college and career readiness programming, which will have negative effects for our state's college and university systems, as well as job fields.

The academic supports provided to students through school counseling programs will not be crafted to hone academic skills for our learners, which will hurt student performance outcomes. Students will not receive important social emotional training through the school counseling curriculum designated by our licensed counselors. School wide prevention activities will be absent. The majority of ND students will not have access to counseling services as the majority do not need extensive intervention provided by mental health professionals, which could allow many North Dakota students to fall through the cracks. It is for these reasons and more that I ask you to not pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Missy Kremer  
*Instructional Coach*  
Heritage Middle School



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