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Re: SB 2260 relating to Parental Rights

Dear House Human Services Committee Members:

I am submitting this letter in opposition to SB 2260 which relates to parental rights. I am the superintendent at Mandaree School District #36 in Mandaree, North Dakota.

If passed this bill will place an extreme burden on teachers and hamper school districts in their number one responsibility which is to keep students safe during the school day.

Requiring instructional materials be made available to parents 7 days prior to implementation is unreasonable at best and an injustice to teachers at its worst. Teachers are trained professionals who follow State standards when planning and implementing instruction. It is borderline insulting to imply that a parent's right to review should or could be the final say in what the teacher presents. The "typical" parent does not have the knowledge, skills, or abilities to determine if a lesson or series of lessons meets or does not meet content standards. This increased strangle hold on an already overworked system would result in teacher burn-out and a mass exit from the profession. Teacher shortages are critical nationwide and rural North Dakota already has trouble attracting teachers to their districts. Schools that are under a Comprehensive School Improvement designation are required to submit a copious amounts of paperwork supporting and documenting their efforts, requiring teachers to add an additional step to the planning process is not a practical use of their instructional time.

The restrictions this bill places on the use of surveillance videos takes us back to a time when schools did not have the equipment to offer a safe and secure environment for students in school. Millions of taxpayer dollars have gone to the purchase and installation of camera systems in every school building in North Dakota. I have used surveillance cameras to find stolen purses, cell phones, reference library materials taken from the library without permission, students in places they were not supposed to be, and unfortunately witnessed student fights, bullying behavior, and illegal substance transfers. Using security camera footage allows administrators to make discipline decisions that are correct and not reliant on the spoken word that can be deceptive and untrue. If restrictive measures are put into place our school buildings will again become unsafe for students.

In a litigious society giving those who find joy in creating havoc one more tool in their arsenal with the ability to sue a school for non-compliance is an injustice to the hard-working professionals in schools across the state.

I ask that the Committee give this bill a DO NOT PASS.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Bluestone
Superintendent of Mandaree School District #36