

January 16, 2023

TO: Representative Jim Grueneich

FROM: Nicole German
10140 89th St SE
Oakes, ND 58474

RE: HB 1246 (Stoplight removal in Oakes, ND)

Dear Representative Grueneich,

Please accept this letter of support for HB 1246 and my concern regarding the proposed removal of the stoplight at the intersection of ND Highway 1 and Main Avenue in Oakes, ND. My concerns are based on the following observations and experience.

1. I work as a paraeducator at Oakes Public School which is located at the corner of the aforementioned intersection. During recess duty, I directly witness *daily* the frequency and speed of vehicles passing by the playground and school area. The speed of vehicles through this area is atrocious. And this is with a stoplight, I can't fathom what it will look like without the stoplight as a safety measure. This is significant safety concern for students not only for arriving and leaving school but also during the lunch timeframe. The "Tornado Stop" convenience store is on the same intersection, across the street from the school. This a popular eating place for students during lunch and before/after school. During these times, there is a *significant* increase in pedestrian traffic crossing ND Highway 1 (despite what the light "data" may show). Without the stoplight, students (including my own), will lose the safety and protection of a crosswalk. A student fatality would be tragic; and even more horrific if it resulted from a decision based on inaccurate data and cost-analysis.
2. Oakes is a thriving agricultural community. During spring planting and fall harvest especially, there is an increase in large machinery and semi-truck traffic through town, specifically along ND Highway 1. Again, I have witnessed first-hand the speed of which these vehicles pass by the school. Drivers that are unfamiliar with the community, may be unaware they will passing directly through a school zone. The stoplight provides at least some measure of speed control. Without the stoplight I have no doubt trucks would pass through town at speeds upward to 40-50mph. This is not only dangerous for students, but anyone trying to cross any intersection within city limits along ND Highway 1.
3. On a personal level, I am the parent of a 12-year son who happens to have Down syndrome. We recently moved back to Oakes (my hometown) from Fargo for multiple reasons. One of those reasons being the safety and community security of a small town. Everyday we are working to help my son (and 8-year old daughter) navigate independently within our community. This includes being able to walk to and from school to businesses, and to friends' homes. The stoplight is the very thing that will allow them to do that. they can safely navigate across ND Highway 1 using the Main Avenue stoplight. Granted, this means having to walk a few extra blocks, but the additional safety that this stoplight and crosswalk provide is invaluable. This stoplight is a vital safety piece for our children to safely navigate within the community. Many parents and community members share my grave concern regarding the impact removing the stoplight will have on the safety of *all children* in our community.

Representative Grueneich, I respectfully petition for you and your constituents to exercise due diligence in determining the status of the stoplight at the intersection of ND Highway 1 and Main Avenue in Oakes, ND. The safety of a thriving small-town community is in your hands.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole Knodel
Concerned Oakes community parent