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**House Bill No. 1144**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**Testimony Presented by Seth O'Neill, JD, MSW**  
**March 7, 2023**

Chairman Elkin and members of the Committee, my name is Seth O'Neill and I am representing CAWS North Dakota in support of HB1144. CAWS North Dakota is the statewide coalition of the domestic violence and sexual assault programs in North Dakota. Our programs serve victims of sexual assault and domestic violence across the state.

We support this bill because it would require educators to annually certify their completion of a training for mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. This training is already in existence and can be found at [mandatedreporter.pcand.org](https://mandatedreporter.pcand.org). The training provides an efficient refresher for mandated reporters on their responsibilities and requirements for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect.

As a former child protection social worker who received these reports of suspected child abuse or neglect, I know that a majority of reports come from educators. Educators are often the first line of defense against child abuse as they interact with a child on a daily basis. Child protection workers rely on educators to report suspected abuse or neglect. We believe that requiring educators to annually complete this simple training is an important step to ensure the safety of children in North Dakota.

For these reasons, we are in support of this bill and encourage the committee to give HB 1144 a do pass recommendation. I appreciate your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.