

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Senate Education Committee.

My name is Austen Schauer, representing West Fargo, District 13.

**HB 1144** is an effort to **reduce** child abuse in North Dakota through **education** and **prevention**.

If passed, each public and nonpublic teacher, administrator and counselor would complete **online training** on the prevention of child abuse.

This training must qualify for **continuing education credits** that count toward license renewal.

The **yearly training** would include childcare providers as there are approximately **36 thousand children** in childcare centers.

The training is **free, web-based**, and takes about a half hour. DHS can do **face to face** training if requested.

Many individuals in our state are required to be mandated reporters, yet **none** is required **by law** to take training to understand the scope of their role as reporters.

Yet, if a mandated reporter **fails to report**—they could face **serious** legal consequences.

How can we require individuals to serve in that important role yet not educate or train them on spotting the signs of abuse and neglect and how to report it?

Research estimates the percentage of teachers who are knowledgeable about the signs of abuse and procedures for reporting varies from **three to ten percent**.

Educators and childcare providers are the first line of defense when it comes to reporting.

Annual reporter training covers the information and tools necessary to identify and report concerns of child abuse or neglect.

This includes spotting the signs of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

Evidence shows the more educators are trained, the **less likely** abuse and neglect happens.

The same is true with **childcare providers**.

Currently, there is no state law that requires childcare providers to take training specific to childcare abuse.

Sex crimes against children continues to be a devastating problem in this country.

Research shows about one in every four girls and one in every 13 boys are sexually abused.

16 out of one thousand kids, ages 12-17, are victims of rape or sexual assault.

This blight on our children happens in nearly every setting; **from home, to church, to schools**.

Training isn't everything, but it is **everything** to a vulnerable child when a well-trained professional sees evidence of child abuse and neglect and reports it.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, we are asking for a **DO PASS** recommendation on **HB 1144**.

Thank you for your time and I am open to questions.