

**Testimony in Opposition to HB 1488**

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**North Dakota Senate Education Committee**

**March 14, 2023**

Chairman Elkin and Members of the Committee:

My name is Christina Sambor, I am submitting testimony on behalf of the North Dakota Human Rights Coalition and Youthworks to oppose HB 1488. The necessity of this bill is far from clear. Whether or not a particular school district has an issue with parental permission for their child's membership in a particular club appears to be an entirely local issue. Have the bills sponsors provided any data from school districts that this is an overwhelming problem in need of a statewide solution? Do school districts even want or support such policy? Why are we increasing governmental involvement and bureaucracy where there is hardly a need?

There are many pressing issues facing North Dakota students currently. Mental health, loneliness, homelessness, and hunger to name a few. Rather than proposing legislation that appears to be attempting to manufacture a problem, we should be focused on evidenced-based problems that we know are plaguing our youth.

For example, in recent national reporting, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that nearly 60 percent of high school girls experienced persistent feelings of sadness. Almost a quarter made a suicide plan. That is problem that needs focus and solution. Many believe, and there is evidence to support, that the proliferation of social media is tied to this spike. In light of this, why would we put up barriers to youth participation in extracurricular activities that increase their in person socialization with peers, interaction with caring adults in their school, and the social and skill development that goes along with participation in extracurricular activities?

1 in 12 North Dakotan children face hunger and 1 in 6 families sought hunger assistance. Over 2,000 school aged North Dakotans experienced homelessness in 2022. Let's focus on listening to and understanding our youth, their parents, our teachers and our school boards, to determine whether or not there is a problem here, or if we're creating an administrative burden with no benefit, and if efforts such as HB 1488 serve to increase mistrust in our schools for no reason. Please vote do not pass on HB 1488.