

Senator Elkin and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Theresa Deckert. I am the former office administrator for the North Dakota Home School Association (NDHSA), long time home educator and former board member of the NDHSA. Today I am here on behalf of that organization asking you to vote yes on SB 2167.

Part one of the bill addresses the waiting period before a family can start to home educate. The current law requires a statement of intent to be filed 14 days before beginning home education. This language is from the original bill which became law in 1989. At that time families had to order their curriculum and wait for it to arrive before they could begin homeschooling. There have been many innovations since then and a large number of homeschool families use online education. As soon as you fill out the application and pay the fee you have immediate access to curriculum. Many of our state support groups have curriculum lending libraries which also grant immediate access to curricula.

During my years as office administrator for the NDHSA I answered many calls from distraught parents who had a child who was either the victim of severe bullying or was having a mental health crisis. I would advise these parents of that waiting period, but would also tell them that the safety of their child needed to come first. I made them aware that I was not giving legal advice. These situations always caused me a lot of angst as I was basically advising the parents that if they were concerned about the safety and well being of their child, then break the law. I did encourage them to see if the school would waive that waiting period, but sometimes the school would refuse.

I have been involved in suicide prevention in my county since 2014 when I lost my younger brother to suicide. I serve on our county's Suicide Prevention Coalition, lead a Survivors of Suicide support group and co-chair our Lake Region Out of the Darkness Suicide Prevention Walk. When a young person is having suicidal ideations or being bullied, 14 days is too long.

The proposed change would have a 5 day waiting period. A parent could pull a child out to homeschool without worrying that they may have a truancy issue. It still allows for a parent who is simply angry and wanting to pull their child to have a cooling off period. On occasion they may change their minds when they find out the work involved and the cost of homeschooling.

The second part of the bill basically fixes a language discrepancy. Section 15.1-23-13 section 2 states: *"Annually the superintendent of the child's school district of residence shall determine reasonable academic progress based on the child's services plan"*

but 15.1-23-15 uses the language

"services plan team agrees that the child is not benefiting from home education".

The later language is subjective and really not measureable. The proposed language "making adequate progress or maintaining progress based on academic ability" is more in line with the language in section 15.1-23-13 and keeps the assessment to academics as opposed to "not benefiting" which could mean different things to different people.

Although small, these changes would ease the burden for families dealing with a high risk situation and clarify language that is vague and subjective. **Please vote in favor of SB 2167.**

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