

SB 2356

Joy Ankenbauer, District 2, Bowbells, ND

I am still bothered by not being allowed to attend some of the public activities of my children during the Covid policies. I am asking that we work together to prevent this from happening in the future.

As some of you may remember, back in late 2020 and the beginning of 2021, several schools in the state had a rule that no fans from the opposing team could attend any of their sporting events. Some schools even enforced a “no fans allowed” rule. The schools that were allowing fans did so in varying ways, some of which restricted parents from attending their children’s events.

This happened in more than just schools. A local hockey club had parents drop their 5-year-olds off at the door, fully dressed in their hockey uniforms and skates. These are 5-year-olds. They will probably need assistance if they have to use the restroom in all that gear. Their parents are waiting outside in their car, not able to help them.

Another hockey club had a no fans allowed rule, and a friend of mine recalled the parking lot filled with parents, sitting in their vehicles, waiting during the game. This specific game wasn’t even broadcast, so they were not able to watch at all.

There are many more examples of parents not being allowed to support their kids at various events, both during school sponsored and club sports. You may have experienced some of these yourself or know someone who did.

Three of my kids were on the drama team for our little town of Bowbells. The regional competition was held with no spectators allowed. I was not able to attend and support my three kids during their regional drama competition.

In April of 2021, my son qualified for State Speech with a humorous duo. I, of course, wanted to attend to support him and watch his speech, which was about two friends trying to talk each other into bungee jumping. The NDHSAA is in charge of putting on this event, so I sent an email to them, requesting that I be able to attend my son’s event. (A few weeks prior to state speech, my son had

played in the regional basketball competition. The gym was packed with teams, families, and fans.) I received an email reply from the NDHSAA stating that, if I would attend to support my son, they “will omit that entry from the schedule.” So, my son would be disqualified if his parent attended his event.

This should not happen.

Parents should not be prevented from attending their children’s activities, for many reasons.

Having a parent at a sporting event or other competition means a lot to most kids. They know they are supported; that their parent is there for them. They know who to run to if they need a band aid, their glasses cleaned, someone to hold their stuff, or (most likely) money for concessions.

You don’t have to look far to know about the abuse that happens to young children. Abuse happens way too often, and it’s horrible what abusers do to children. Restricting parents from events of their children takes away a layer of protection from a young, vulnerable population.

Last winter, my son received a concussion after being hit in the eye during a basketball game. Last summer, my other son was hit on the side of the head while he was up to bat at a baseball game. Both my husband and I were present at these events and were able to make some important medical decisions, one which involved a trip to the emergency room for a CT scan. What would have happened had my husband and I not been there?

No one cares about their kid like a parent. No one cares more about all aspects of their safety, their well being, and their health. Please prevent parents from being barred from their child’s activities.

I ask for a DO PASS for Senate Bill No. 2356