

Good afternoon Madame Chair and members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is Bob Paulson, and I'm a State Senator from District 3 in Minot. It sure is nice to be able to introduce a bill in front of your own committee.

SB 2260 is a bill to codify parental rights in North Dakota. In preparation for submitting this bill, I researched legislation that has been passed in several states. I picked my three favorites and asked Legislative Council to blend them into a North Dakota bill. They expressed concern over the difficulty of that task, and about that time I discovered legislation which brought all of the concepts together and was exactly what I was looking for, and that's what you have before you.

I owe Sen. Clemens a debt of gratitude in bringing his bill first, as it helped inform me on some of the objections of the opposition. After going through 2260 following opposition testimony to SB 2188, I was relieved to discover that this version of the bill addresses the vast majority of the concerns expressed by the opposition to 2188.

I believe it was Senator Braunberger who asked the question regarding what things were happening in North Dakota that led to the introduction of Sen. Clemens' bill. I think it's appropriate to attempt to answer that question.

First, there are things going on nationally. As parents learned more about what their children were being taught during COVID, they raised concerns at school board meetings and were met with threat of FBI investigation, effectively treating them like terrorists. That wasn't limited to any one state—the FBI's memo applied nationwide, including right here in North Dakota. Virginia gubernatorial candidate Terry McAuliffe said, "I don't think parents should be telling schools what they should teach." Rep. Eric Swalwell, D-Calif., lamented how "stupid" it is for parents to be in charge of their kids' education.

As I spoke with parents and teachers from across the state, they shared things of concern that are going on in North Dakota. Things like:

- Children in elementary school being given surveys that asked questions about gender identity without parental notification

- Children being asked what their preferred pronouns or preferred names are, allowing for the use of a name or identity of the opposite sex without parental notification.
- Biological males using female bathrooms (K12)
- Teachers being given mandatory training in Social Emotional Learning curriculum
- A teacher teaching the United Nations Sustainable Goals-Agenda 2030,
- A class on spiritualism with guided meditation (teacher called in sick)
- A Gender & Sexualities Alliance club meeting during school hours with a faculty advisor
- There are books in school libraries that describe how to get an app that is used to find others in your area interested in gay sex. This book and others describe specific techniques and recommendations for how to engage in gay sex. The parents I spoke with who had children in the school were unaware of these books. Additionally, the leadership of the school district was unaware of these books that are in the library.

The most telling thing to me was that the teachers who talked to me either refused to put things in writing, or only did so with assurances from me that I would not name them in my testimony. Think about that. These teachers are afraid of retribution.

These things going on in our state are why I felt it was critical to introduce this bill.

Here are some things we need to establish in North Dakota, and this bill seeks to do just that:

1. That Children are born to parents and into families that form the building blocks of a society.
2. That the laws of a society should affirm the natural order of parents raising their children and reject the idea that children are products and property of the government.
3. That we must protect parents' fundamental right and duty to direct the upbringing and education of their children.

When it comes to Public School Curricula, there should be:

Accountability: Teachers and school administrators should not betray parents' trust by hiding information or indoctrinating students with ideas directly contrary to their family's sincere beliefs.

Choice: Parents should know what their children are taught and should have the freedom to opt-out of controversial curriculum or choose the schooling solution that best fits their families.

Transparency: Parents are ultimately responsible for their children. Public schools have a responsibility and duty to be transparent about what they are teaching children and to respect parents' wishes when it comes to divisive and potentially harmful issues including gender ideology or critical race theory.

A parent's right to direct their children's upbringing doesn't end at the schoolhouse gate.

When It comes to Medical Decision-Making

Parents know their children best. Their medical and moral decisions for their children should not be ignored or overruled, either by school officials or others.

Schools have a responsibility to keep parents informed—they cannot hide information about a child's mental or physical well-being from their parents.

Only parents have the authority to make medical decisions for their minor children. No-one knows their children better than parents do, and nobody loves their children more than parents do.

A parent has a right to be a parent. Parents won't take a back seat in their children's health decisions.

I would like to briefly go through the bill.

Legislative Protections for Parental Rights:

How states can better protect parents' ability to raise and educate their children consistent with their beliefs and values



Parents have the right to direct the upbringing of their children. We've seen growing instances nationwide of government officials actively seeking to replace parents as the ultimate determiners of what's best for children. States must enact laws that make it clear that the government cannot interfere with parents' fundamental rights. Parents know their children best—not the government.

Schools Must Respect Parental Rights

Parental rights are pre-political and guaranteed by our Constitution. Parents' choices about how best to raise their children should not be ignored or overruled by school officials. Instead, it is in kids' best interests for parents to be involved any time a child faces serious issues at school, whether academic, social, or mental or emotional health. Parents love and care for their children far more than any government bureaucrat will ever do. So parents must be immediately informed when such issues arise so that they can help their child navigate and overcome any challenges.

Sadly, some schools work to exclude parents from their child's life, rather than partnering with parents to support children. But schools have no right to shut parents out of their child's education and development. They are accountable to parents, who should have access to the curriculum, policies, and information the school keeps about their children.

While many states have numerous educational options for families, they offer weak protections for parental involvement at school leaving families helpless when their child is exposed to harmful content or policies that threaten a child's privacy and safety.

The Principles for Strong Parental Rights Laws

- 1 Recognize that parental rights are fundamental and that the government cannot infringe those rights unless it has a compelling reason to do so.
- 2 Explain the scope of parental rights, including decisions concerning a child's education, moral and religious upbringing, health care, and issues related to the upbringing of the child.
- 3 Provide a legal remedy for families whose rights are violated. Otherwise, families may be left with no recourse when the government tramples their rights.

