

Engrossed HB 1341

Senate Energy and Natural Resources

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Chair Patten and Committee Members: my name is Katie Fitzsimmons and I serve as the Director of Student Affairs for the North Dakota University System. I am representing the System Office and the NDUS campuses in neutral stance to Engrossed HB 1341. The bill would call for a comprehensive study on firearms and dangerous weapons. The University System respectfully requests an amendment to the bill.

Our campuses are places where students of all ages go to learn, live, eat, workout, perform, practice, research, and compete. Students sleep on the property, faculty and staff work all hours, we have campus police and security to respond to emergencies, and our campuses have daycares, cafeterias, swimming pools, and theaters while boasting classrooms, labs, and libraries. Most of these spaces are open to the public and are defined in code as public gathering spaces. When you compare the happenings of a campus to that of other public gathering spaces such as a courthouse, a K-12 school, or a state office building, it is plain to see that we are a different animal. Perhaps this in-depth study would determine that not all spaces on our campuses are created or managed equally to other public spaces. And thus, those spaces could likely be treated differently in regard to use and possession of weapons.

The University System respectfully requests a seat at the table during the interim study if the committee believes an outcome of the study would directly impact the campuses in the state. The current proposal mandates participation from the attorney general, tax commissioner, superintendent of public instruction, supreme court, association of counties, league of cities, state’s attorney association, association of criminal defense lawyers, and peace officers association. We believe representation from the System Office or one of our campuses could enlighten the group about the variance in spaces, how they are used, and who uses them.

That concludes my testimony on HB 1341. Again, I respectfully request the committee consider including the University System during the interim and amend the bill as such. I stand for questions and thank you for your time and service.