

1 HB1223 - Suspension and Expulsion – by Andrew Jordan, Superintendent Wilton Public  
2 Schools

3 Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

4 I am providing written testimony in support of HB1223, a bill that amends and reenacts section  
5 15.1-19-09 of the North Dakota Century Code to ensure the suspension and expulsion processes  
6 for students in our schools are fair, supportive, and equitable.

7 As educators, community members, and parents, it is our shared responsibility to provide a safe,  
8 supportive, and equitable learning environment for all students. Schools are places where young  
9 people come to grow, learn, and thrive. To achieve this goal, our disciplinary measures must take  
10 into account the complexity of each situation, the individual student involved, and the severity of  
11 the behavior.

12 One example underscores the importance of this bill. In May 2023, two students in Wilton made  
13 the decision to sit in their truck before school and shoot airsoft guns at students walking into  
14 school. While no one was physically harmed, the emotional impact on students and the sense of  
15 fear that permeated the school community was significant. These actions caused significant  
16 disruption to the school environment and a deep sense of insecurity among students and staff.  
17 Although these students were expelled just three days before the end of the school year, a  
18 situation of this severity would clearly warrant a calendar-year expulsion based on the danger  
19 and fear it caused.

20 HB1223 allows districts to adopt rules that ensure procedural fairness while granting school  
21 boards the flexibility to consider factors such as the severity of the infraction, the age of the  
22 student, and their disciplinary history. This balanced approach allows us to address serious  
23 incidents like the one in Wilton, where the safety and well-being of the entire school community  
24 were put at risk, while also ensuring that minor infractions are not met with disproportionately  
25 harsh consequences.

26 We must also acknowledge the developmental nature of young people. Every student is capable  
27 of growth, and our discipline policies must reflect an understanding of this. By implementing  
28 conditions for reinstatement and periodically reviewing expulsions, we create pathways for  
29 students to return to the learning environment when they have demonstrated a readiness to do so.  
30 This approach balances accountability with compassion.

31 In conclusion, HB1223 is an essential step toward creating schools where all students feel safe,  
32 valued, and supported. It provides the structure and flexibility needed to address severe incidents  
33 appropriately while ensuring fairness and equity for all students. I urge you to support this bill to  
34 help us build a more just and secure educational environment for every student in North Dakota.

35 Thank you for your time and consideration.