

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to encourage a vote **IN OPPOSITION** to HB 1456. I am a lifelong resident of ND.

Our country was founded by colonists who left Europe to escape restrictive laws compelling them to support and attend government-favored churches. The concept of religious freedom is literally what our country was founded upon, and what is enshrined in the First Amendment to our Constitution.

There are hundreds of religions other than Christianity being practiced in our society, including right here in ND. Additionally, there has been a gradual decline in Americans identifying as Christian over many years. For some reason there is a group of vocal Christians pushing legislation that would affect ALL OF US in this state, including those who do not share the same religious beliefs. Where is the constitutional integrity?

Over 200 individual chaplains, 38 faith groups, and 34 civil rights organizations have spoken out against legislation installing chaplains in public schools across the country.

Religion has **NO PLACE** in law or government or **public** education. Certainly, people should have the freedom to practice the religion of their choosing at home, or church, or in private schools.

These funds could be directed toward other vitally necessary avenues in our public education system such as increasing hiring of social workers/counselors/teachers/aides, increasing educator salaries, providing subsidized school breakfast/lunch, etc.

Please consider the values of ALL of your constituents, and the values of the Founding Fathers of our constitution, and **DO NOT PASS** HB 1456. Thank you.