



Testimony on HB 1456
National Association of Social Workers – North Dakota Chapter
House Education Committee
February 11, 2025

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee:

The North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-ND) opposes HB 1456 due to concerns about its impact on inclusivity and respect for students' rights. While we recognize the importance of providing support to students, we believe that employing certified chaplains in public schools risks promoting religious practices that may alienate students who do not share Judeo-Christian beliefs. This could create an environment where students feel pressured to conform, hindering their ability to express their beliefs freely.

NASW-ND firmly believes in the inherent dignity of every person and in maintaining pluralistic environments in schools. Bringing certified chaplains into schools risks undermining the inclusive, diverse, and respectful educational space essential for students of all backgrounds. The presence of chaplains may inadvertently create discomfort for some students, hindering their ability to freely express their beliefs and fully engage in their educational experiences – making schools inherently less inclusive.

Furthermore, HB 1456 diverts state funds to bring chaplains into schools. Social workers and counselors already provide support to students with concerns to their social and emotional health in the school system. If more support is needed, the state should consider further supporting and expanding resources for the personnel who already exist in the system, not create and fund new, potentially divisive positions.

For these reasons, NASW-ND urges the committee to carefully consider the impact of this bill on the inclusive and pluralistic nature of public education in North Dakota. We believe that while support services are crucial, the involvement of religious figures in public school settings may not align with the fundamental principles of equality and respect for all students. Therefore, NASW-ND respectfully urges a **"Do Not Pass"** recommendation for HB 1456.

Respectfully,

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Advocacy Committee Member
North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers