

February 8, 2025

Re: HB 1490

Dear legislators of North Dakota:

I am a school counselor in western North Dakota. I am asking you to please vote no on House Bill 1490, which mandates that school counselors may only provide services to students if another faculty member is present or they have been evaluated by a licensed psychologist and “cleared.” This bill is untenable, unworkable, unfair, and unreasonable.

First, this will put additional financial burden on school districts and taxpayers. Districts who are already paying licensed school counselors to provide services to students must now pay either for additional staff to sit in with the counselor, or for a psychological evaluation provided by a third party every two years. As you likely know if you’ve been in the legislature for the last session or two, we have a shortage of mental health professionals in our state. This will only exacerbate the problem and limit services to students.

Second, this mandate is unnecessary. Certainly, there are individual school counselors who are “bad apples,” but this is rare. Most counselors are caring, ethical, and interested in student welfare. In addition, we have master’s degrees which include entire courses in ethical behavior and professionalism. School counselors who ignore these guidelines should not be allowed to continue in this profession – but don’t punish the rest of us. Similar attempts have been made for other professions, such as the “Defund the Police” movement of a few years ago. Most of us would agree that law enforcement is important to any safe and functioning society, just as school counselors are essential to the well-being of public schools students.

House Bill 1490 is wasteful and unnecessary, and pointed at one or two bad individuals who have violated our standards and principles. Most of us want to continue caring for students as we always do. Please vote no on this bill to keep our schools healthy.

Thank you,

Rachel Meuchel  
High School Counselor