

## Opposition to HB 1490.

School Counselors are held to the highest standards when it comes to ethics and law. We take 48-60 credits of schooling (depending on the program and when a person graduating graduate school). We are trained and complete continuing education to benefit the students we work with and to protect them from harmful things in the world. We are urged to seek our own counseling as it is needed and are taught to recognize the signs of burnout and struggles through our schooling. School districts have set up EAP programs that make it easy for us to reach out for help when it is needed. School districts also have policies in place and are superiors are trained to look for signs that personnel and staff need help OR there is something inappropriate happening.

I will outline my concerns in the points below:

- I urge you to do more research on what a psychological evaluation is used for and the cost of those evaluations. The cost alone is a hardship, that would fall back on either the school counselor's personal money or the school districts funds.
- Aside from cost, psychological evaluations are typically hard to schedule because the schedule for one is backlogged. So, adding unnecessary evaluations to already full loads are not going to benefit anyone.
- If a person does not complete a psychological evaluation, this means another staff member must sit in the room when a student is present? This means that confidentiality with that student is completely broken. No other staff member in a school is held to the same standard of confidentiality that school counselors are held. This is a disservice to our students who are confiding in us to help them navigate difficult situations and is a disservice to the school counselor profession. It's a complete violation of our ethical code. Students would never trust us.
- I also think it is a personal violation that school boards would have access to my very personal medical records and that this medical record is put into my personnel file. Could this be used to wrongly fire me? What's the limit and what determines if a person is unsafe to work with students? Where is the guidance from this going to come from? If this is something that would become mandatory, I don't know that school would have school counselors anymore. Who would want to work in a school if this is what they are subject to?

My understanding is this bill is being proposed in reaction to a very specific incident involving a school counselor in North Dakota. While this incident is tragic and alarming this is not the norm. Just like in any profession, teachers, doctors, clergy, etc. there are people that do illegal and gross acts towards others, sometimes even minors. I don't know what the answer is to prevent these awful situations, but I do know that a psychological evaluation is not going to prevent these acts from happening. I urge you to vote in opposition to this bill, for the sake of the school counseling profession and for the sake of our students having access to a school counselor in their buildings.