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Education Committee

House Bill 1490 - February 10, 2025

Testimony of Brenda Ruehl, P&A Director Program Services

Greetings Chairman Heinert and members of the Education Committee. My name is Brenda Ruehl and I'm a Director of Program Services at the North Dakota Protection and Advocacy Project (P&A). P&A is an independent state agency established in 1977 to assert and advance the human, civil, and legal rights of people with disabilities. The agency's programs and services seek to make positive changes for people with disabilities where we live, learn, work and play.

P&A opposes the passage of this bill. We oppose this bill because school counselors are not the only school personnel who provide services to students and are alone with students. Why would only school counselors be required to have a psychological evaluation when teachers, coaches, administrators and school nurses, to name a few, develop trust with students and can be alone with them.

If you do pass this bill, P&A request that an amendment be made. School counselors should be required to be members of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) or similar professional organization, with fees paid by school district. ASCA is a professional organization supporting school counselors, school counseling students/interns, school counseling program directors/supervisors and school counselor educators. ASCA standards are the ethical responsibility of all school counseling professionals. From student safety and confidentiality to interactions with parents/guardians and administrators, school counselors encounter a range of legal and ethical issues every day. Members of the ASCA have tools, resources, support and ethical requirements which protect students and counselors.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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