

Testimony Against House Bill 1490

Dear legislators of North Dakota,

My name is Alicia Broten, and I am the Jr/Sr High School Counselor employed by Barnes County North. I am writing to *strongly* and *firmly* oppose House Bill 1490, mandating that all high school counselors have psychological evaluations or will not be authorized to provide services to a student without another faculty member present.

To be honest, this is absolutely absurd and insulting to me as a professional school counselor, holding a master's degree, pouring my energy, compassion, and empathy into each and every student I have. During my day, I am already required to meet the standard set by the NDSCA, the state of North Dakota, and my school district. I have gone to school for years achieving my bachelor's in psychology and graduating with a 4.0 with a master's in school counseling. I assure you that myself, as well as my fellow school counselors, are more than qualified to professionally and successfully do our jobs without an evaluation. Be mindful that all employers require a background check, we are required to take continuing education, to attend professional development, and attend conferences that continuously assess and educate our minds. The mistrust this bill is applying is offensive and degrading.

My personal and psychological history is personal, private, and there is no reason it should be open to anyone to assess or gauge my ability to perform my duties. I will not stand or support any bill that implies a bias towards an individual's mental health. Every day, I continuously educate, support, and reinforce my students that it is ok to struggle, to seek help, and to accept that help. Everyone struggles. Everyone has a past. They are no less than inferior, and should not be treated in any way but as an equal. Now we, as counselors, are threatened and face feeling subordinate, labeled, or simply inadequate.

I am truly saddened by our state introducing such a scrutinizing bill. This is not what counselors stand for. I would have expected counselors to be supported and applauded; here we sit in 2025, fighting for our rights to privacy and trust. I guarantee if any evidence or question would be directed towards my capability to perform my duties, my administrators are honest and trusted individuals who are willing and competent to manage the situation.

I would like my voice heard, my opinions acknowledged, and my professional performance trusted. Please refrain from granting this bill. North Dakota currently suffers from a shortage in school counselors. I not only believe, but I also guarantee, the shortage will increase significantly.

My name is Alicia Broten, a wife, a mother of four, a business owner, and a school counselor. I can promise that I would not have pursued this career if I could not only achieve success in my position but hold a strong passion for it. My time, my thoughts, and my fears should not ever be

directed towards scrutiny in my professionalism. My hope is that you not only hear our voices but listen to our words as we do every day to the children in our district and perhaps your own children as well.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to vote against House Bill 1490. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alicia Broten
Jr/Sr High School Counselor
Barnes County North