

Ivan Berg

McVille ND

Husband, Father of 3, multiple business owner including a daycare, and formerly president of a critical access hospital, clinic and care center. I am no stranger to counseling and its importance.

In my area, a fully credentialed school counselor, teacher, coach and union steward was active for nearly 15 years in my community, grooming, assaulting and controlling victims even after they had left school. He was one of my football coaches and man that I had trusted originally. Few years after my graduation my eventual wife became one of his victims. Her like many of the other victims were pulled out of class and were made to go see him in his office, and were repeatedly asked about their relationships with their boyfriends until he would become aroused. After eventually being assaulted in his office from behind, his threats of suicide and talk of cutting himself were used against her to control her and to keep her from telling. Besides my wife several other incidents with students ended up being reported up the chain of command, some all the way to the school boards at our school and a neighboring school he taught drivers ed at. It was not until the state BCI, local law enforcement and now the dept of justice got involved did things actually begin to change, and he is now out of our area.

I am of the opinion that public school counselors are absolutely vital to help kids in their most formative years. They are the first source of help on issues large and small. This bill aims to raise the standard of the quality of school counseling, while regaining public trust, and hopefully in the future lead to more compensation for these important people within our schools. It will also help transfer some liability to the insurers of the attending psychologist, and away from the schools and the NDIRF.

As for cost of the evals, how does one measure the cost of these traumas to the victims and their loved ones, the damage to the school district, and the counseling profession at our public schools? Counselors are to be held to a higher standard than teachers, they are more critical to the students that need them. Cost can be figured out.

You will see in some of the opposition, they are unwilling to even admit there is a problem. They don't have to agree with this for it to continue to be worked on. This bill is for parents, students and anyone whose made to feel like an outsider to their local education system. I hope with work it can become something that a bulk of the school counselors in our state can tolerate, and if they don't cooperate hopefully lawmakers can see that for what it is.

Cognitive dissonance, legal paralysis, and union tactics allowed this man to continue to act long after problems at my school were made apparent. This bill would have prevented or stopped this man.

Cost concerns and making school counselors feel separated from the rest of the faculty is not a good enough reason for this bill not to continue.