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TO: House Education Committee

FR: Todd Olson

RE: Opposition to HB 1491

I am writing to express my opposition to HB 1491 which would essentially remove any ability for the North Dakota High School Activities Association (NDHSAA) to regulate athletics-driven student transfers between member schools. I believe that altering the transfer rules in this manner would be as harmful to high school athletics as the “transfer portal” has been to college athletics. As written, HB 1491 has the potential to be the greatest threat to high school sports that I have witnessed in my more than 30 years in education-based athletics in North Dakota.

This bill would open the door to widespread recruiting in an effort to create super teams in a variety of sports. The creation of these types of teams will lead to a lack of competitive balance and an increase in lopsided scores. Ultimately, I believe this will lead to a decrease in student participation in high school sports in our state.

In Florida, where their legislature enacted legislation eliminating many of their transfer rules, they are already seeing the negative consequences. Lanness Robinson, Director of Athletics for the Hillsborough County Public Schools in Tampa, Florida, shared with me that he would describe high school athletics in Florida as “out of control.” Robinson stated that education-based athletics in Florida is now starting to mirror the club sports mentality. He also observed that Hillsborough County participation numbers are already starting to decline.

In closing, I would share that the NDHSAA transfer guidelines fairly manage student transfers for our students and schools. There are already a variety of exceptions to the transfer rules clearly stated in the NDHSAA Constitution and By-Laws that have been well administered by the NDHSAA staff. In a recent survey, more than 90% of the responding member schools indicated that they were in agreement with the current regulations.

High school sports are in a great place in North Dakota. Please don't act to do anything to negatively impact the current status.