



NORTH HIGH SCHOOL
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House Bill 1491

Testimony of Travis Christensen

House Education Committee

February 11, 2025

Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding HB 1491. I am Travis Christensen, Principal at Fargo North High School, and I am testifying to express my strong opposition to House Bill 1491. As a high school principal, I am deeply committed to the educational and personal development of our students. I am concerned that this bill, which seeks to eliminate the current student transfer regulations found in the NDHSAA Constitution and By Laws, is a solution in search of a problem, which if passed will actually create many more problems than currently exist.

The current transfer policy is a well-considered framework that includes clearly defined rules, supplemented by 12 specific exceptions, and a hardship process. This language has proven effective in guiding us as school administrators through the various transfer requests and inquiries we encounter. It offers both structure and flexibility, ensuring that decisions are made with careful consideration of the circumstances surrounding each transfer. Notably, over 90% of responding schools in a recent NDHSAA survey indicated their preference to maintain the existing language, underscoring a shared confidence in the current system.

House Bill 1491's proposal to eliminate the presumption of recruitment or undue influence is particularly troubling. By removing this critical presumption, the bill opens the door to recruitment, incentivizing, and enticement of student athletes by both school-affiliated and non-school-affiliated groups or individuals. This could lead to a form of "free agency" in high school athletics, shifting the focus from the educational mission to winning at all costs. Such a shift is contrary to the fundamental principles of high school athletics—fair play, integrity, and sportsmanship—which are designed to enrich the educational experience and promote essential life skills such as resilience, grit, and teamwork.

Additionally, the removal of the requirement for evidence that a parent or guardian has vacated a previous residence poses significant concerns. If students are permitted to transfer schools without such verification, there is an increased likelihood of instability, with students potentially moving from one school to another on a frequent basis. This could disrupt their academic progress and hinder the continuity of their educational experience.

As we move forward, we must continue to ensure that transfers are not predominantly driven by athletic or activity-based incentives. The current guidelines provide a balanced approach that safeguards both the integrity of high school athletics and the academic well-being of our students. Preserving the existing transfer regulations and having those regulations under the prevue of the NDHSAA and its 171 member schools is essential to maintaining the standards that support our educational mission and the holistic development of our student-athletes.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Travis Christensen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T" and "C".

Travis Christensen, Principal
Fargo North High School