

St John School District #3
House Bill 1491 Written Testimony

We strongly oppose the passing of House Bill 1491 for various reasons. We don't want to get away from the things that make our schools and communities special, a place where we want people to raise families, and that we are proud of.

I have 20-plus years coaching various sports, 20 years as a principal in North Dakota, and a lifetime of being in or around sports.

- 1) The sense of community will be negatively impacted – our schools and communities are proud of who they are, where they come from, and what school they attended. They bleed their school colors. This will have a negative impact as students and families that have never invested any time in the community and school will come in for the sole reason of their kid playing and/or winning. WINNING AND MY KID PLAYING BECOMES THE FOCUS instead of community and family involvement. The sense of community starts to fade away, and problems begin to arise as the locals are no longer as invested as they once were. That is how our small towns and schools continue to survive, everyone coming together and working together. That is what we do in North Dakota!
- 2) Education in today's world is challenging as it is. Now we might have something else put on our plate, along with, staff shortages, accountability, budget cuts, etc. that will significantly impact how we currently do things and how we will want to do things going forward. Sports will potentially replace an equitable, effective academic experience as the primary focus of our institutions. Sports is already a challenge in most places; policies, such as the one currently, continue to add to the challenge of extracurriculars and academics working together as a single, fluid experience for our students.
- 3) High school sports are intended to be for all students to be able to participate in. It helps with physical fitness, mental health, working with others, leadership, confidence, and social development. With the potential movement from House Bill 1491, are the same number of kids going to participate when student-athletes are transferring in to solely play and not necessarily build those skills with their teams leading up to the four high school seasons? Building those teamwork-based skills has always been a foundation of the purpose of high school athletics, but a policy such as this is disregarding those goals.
- 4) What happens to the academic integrity of schools when students are transferring in at all times of the year and schools are forced to "fit" them into a schedule, or educate them when they have not been there for most of the semester? Again, a bill like this implies curricular power held within sports despite them still falling under extracurricular activities. Academic institutions educate first, above all else, and all in all, this bill will undoubtedly impact the already fragile academic environment through the separation of schools and potentially the city community.

Charles Anderson, Principal
Dink Dink, AD

Rich L. Veltch, Superintendent