

Today, Chairman Heinert and members, of this very vital committee, I am writing to express my unwavering support for HB1491, a legislative measure aimed at rebalancing the authority of external organizations over our students' extracurricular activities. This bill seeks to ensure that decisions affecting our students remain within the purview of our educational institutions and the parents, rather than being dictated by external entities with no direct affiliation to our schools.

Limiting External Control

The NDHSAA's eligibility rules are designed to assist schools and coaches in guiding students without interference from outside teams, ensuring that coaching instructions remain consistent. However, it's imperative that these guidelines do not overreach, especially concerning students who may not be directly affiliated with member schools.

Instead of listening to a foundation that is failing to stand up for the very students it claims to support, we must turn our attention to the child who has the courage to stand against this broken system. When a student steps forward to challenge the rules that hinder their participation and limit their opportunities, we should not dismiss them, we should listen. Their voice should not be overshadowed by an organization more concerned with maintaining control than protecting the rights of the very athlete it claims to govern. **I encourage you to read Kambree Draper's story.**

By passing this bill, we affirm our commitment to keeping the focus on our students and ensuring that decisions affecting them are made by those who know them best, their educators and local school administrators. Let us prioritize the well-being and development of our students over external organizational interests. Let us stand with the students who refuse to accept an unfair system and demand better for themselves and future generations.

Empowering Local Schools

Currently, schools are required to pay membership dues to organizations like the North Dakota High School Activities Association (NDHSAA) to participate in interscholastic activities. These dues are calculated at a rate of 20 cents per student enrolled in grades 7-12, with a minimum of \$25 and a maximum of \$350 annually. Additionally, schools are charged a \$35 fee for each activity they participate in, including those under cooperative agreements.

While the NDHSAA plays a role in organizing and regulating high school activities, it's crucial that our schools retain autonomy over decisions impacting their students. The NDHSAA's Constitution states that member schools have control over their Constitution and By-Laws, but it is the Board of Directors that interprets them. This raises concerns when those interpretations limit student opportunities without proper representation from those directly affected.

If there is a fiscal responsibility or a "study" are applied to this bill, then you will be considered part of the problem. We have to fight for our children. After-All they are the ones that are going to stand for us we can't. Please show these kids their voices matter more than a company being paid to make them rules. Rules are great and I would be the NDHSAA's biggest cheerleader, if I felt that somewhere along the way they lost their way. It's never too late to do the right thing.

Sharlet Mohr