

Testimony in Opposition to SB2105
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As both a parent and a researcher of child and youth behavior, I urge a “Do Not Pass” recommendation and a no vote on SB 2105. I have conducted research using survey data for over 30 years. In fact, as a professor at North Dakota State University, I am paid by the state of North Dakota, in part to conduct research on children and youth. I have conducted research on bullying, afterschool programs, suicide prevention programs, and interventions for aggressive children. To determine the overall prevalence of risk behaviors, I have relied on data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey. Each of the studies I have conducted has been first vetted by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protections of human participants in research, and each has involved some level of parental informed consent, whether that be to opt-in or opt-out. In every case, surveys were available for parental review, though we had very few requests over the years.

If this bill become law, the research that the state is paying me to do will become much more difficult to conduct, and in many cases the research will not be conducted at all because we will not be able to get an adequate and representative sample. One consequence of this is that we will know much less about the risks facing our children and youth and will be less able to create interventions to mitigate those risks, leading to a greater numbers of youth affected by unhealthy behaviors. A second implication is that it will become more difficult for us to recruit new faculty in our field to come to NDSU once they understand the restrictions against collecting data in schools.

Finally, contrary to some of the concerns voiced by those in favor of this bill, there is no evidence that exposure to questions about risky behavior causes youth to become more likely to engage in that behavior.