

House Education Committee
March 12th, 2025 SB 2105
Testimony in Opposition

Dear Chair Heinert and the members of the House Education Committee,

I urge a “Do Not Pass” on SB 2105.

My original testimony expressed concern over the future of the YRBS, which is a critical data set that I use within my work and has led in part to millions of dollars coming into our state through grants. Listening to testimony during the first hearing of this bill, I was not surprised to learn there were dozens of stakeholders that would be negatively impacted by the restrictions this bill imposes. Where we would not be able to conduct necessary surveys or get adequate data if we created a required opt-in model.

To listen to individuals in favor of this bill it was about parental choice. While this is a strong value that many in North Dakota fight for, what we found is that parents already have a choice. They can opt their kids out of surveys and have access to the full questionnaire of the surveys that we conduct. Very few parents opt their child out of these surveys or particularly care about them. Which means this direction would only serve a small minority of parents who already have the authority to keep their kid from participating in content they do not want.

To put another way, we are creating hurdles for the essential work many data researchers conduct every year to make life slightly easier for a couple of parents. This is not a winning scenario and this is not in service to our kids, our parents, families or state. We need this data to accurately understand and prevent issues of abuse, neglect, or substance misuse. We need it for grants and to determine if the work we are doing is landing.

I am an advocate for youth and when I think of the opt-in model, I think about abusive parents who would of course refuse to let their children take surveys like this. And while this isn't necessarily the scope of this bill or discussion, children should have a voice too. We should be able to listen to their experience, because if they are silenced, so too is the harm that happens to them and I think this bill is moving us in the wrong direction when thinking about preventing child abuse. For this reason, I urge you a “Do Not Pass.”

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state,
Faye Seidler