

Angela York

Regarding House Bill No. 1145

9 January 2025

My name is Angela York. I am a North Dakota resident testifying in opposition to House Bill No. 1145, which would mandate Ten Commandments displays in public educational institutions.

I am a North Dakota native who grew up in our public schools. I was raised by my family to be Lutheran, but knew from a young age that I was not religiously inclined. I experienced discrimination from my family and others due to my lack of religion, but I always found school to be a safe space where my religion, or lack thereof, did not make me a secondary citizen. That feeling of safety allowed me to thrive despite other hardships. This bill would intentionally introduce religious discrimination into the classroom, privileging those who are aligned with particular religions. I want to be proud of my state, but this legislation would intentionally harm North Dakota students. North Dakota, at its best, should be welcoming and inclusive of students of all faiths and backgrounds, so that we can continue to grow and benefit from the contributions of a diverse populace.

This bill also conflicts with the principles of religious freedom in the U.S. Constitution and North Dakota's Declaration of Rights, which prohibits religious discrimination. Mandating the Ten Commandments displays clearly shows preference for one set of religions and discriminates against those of different faiths or no faith at all.

I believe the North Dakota Legislative Assembly should reject this bill and instead focus on legislation that addresses pressing issues affecting our quality of life, such as economic opportunity and healthcare access. These are areas where legislative action can make a meaningful difference in the lives of North Dakotans without infringing on constitutional rights or promoting religious preferences in public institutions. I am grateful to Representatives Zachary Ista and Eric Murphy for their very quick and positive response to my concerns.

To solve this issue, I suggest the following:

1. Vote "No" on House Bill No. 1145.
2. Redirect legislative efforts toward addressing tangible quality-of-life issues that impact all North Dakota residents.

Thank you for reading my testimony. I sincerely hope you will consider my concerns and the solutions I have suggested. Your thoughtful consideration of these matters is greatly appreciated.

Angela York