

HB 1145

This testimony is in opposition to HB 1145 which would require the posting of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms.

The Constitution of the United States makes it clear that government and governmental entities cannot require or coerce people to follow any particular religion. This bill is inconsistent with that fundamental principle. The freedom to follow one's own religion, or no religion, is critical to the integrity of what the United States stands for.

Just in Grand Forks, we have not only Christians of many denominations, but Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Unitarians, Buddhists, and people of no religion at all. Posting the Ten Commandments in the schools would create a hostile atmosphere for all who are not Christian and create the appearance, if not the actuality, of proselytizing. Public schools are not places for Christian education. That task belongs to parents and faith communities.

My denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), which has almost 144,000 members in North Dakota, celebrates the diversity of this nation and does not seek to dictate to those from other religious traditions.

I urge legislators to vote NO on this bill.