

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION**  
**TO HB 1145**

House Judiciary Committee

Date of Hearing: January 14, 2024

Rev. Ellery Dykeman 1840 12<sup>th</sup> St SW, Minot, ND 58701

My name is Ellery Dykeman. I am a resident of North Dakota and I have served for 7 years as a pastor for a Lutheran congregation here in Minot. This written testimony is presented in opposition to HB1145

Article VII, Section 1 of the North Dakota Constitution declares, “that a free education is necessary for all children of the State of North Dakota and must be “free from sectarian control.”<sup>1</sup>

Although I can appreciate the desire to teach our children ethics and morals, I feel this bill is misguided. As an ordained pastor, with 4 years of theological and biblical training, I appreciate the complexity and nuance of interpreting the 10 commandments, which includes the basic disagreement in the numbering of the 10. I know most of our teachers have no interest or training in the different interpretations of Rabbis, priests, pastors, Imams, theologians, and Hebrew (the original language of the Old Testament) scholars, let alone the specific teachings of countless denominations, synagogues, mosques, and family traditions.

Of all the concepts in the bible, these verses don’t even have a prominent place in our congregation here in Minot. We focus on Jesus’ summary of the commandments, meant specifically for his followers, is to “Love God, and love your neighbor”. These biblical teachings and interpretations should be left in the hands for local religious leaders, faith communities, and families to discuss and live out.

Finally, considering this bill clearly goes against the both the United States and North Dakota constitutions, this bill will negatively impact our state and local school districts already limited budgets with countless legal battles and lawsuits.

Please oppose HB 1145.

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution of North Dakota, Article VIII Section 1