

Chrystopher Bitz
4027 Bayport Pl SE
Mandan, ND 58554
January 12, 2025

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary. My name is Chrystopher Bitz and I am testifying today in support of HB1166.

I am submitting this testimony to bring to your attention the significant impact caused by the reopening of files related to a case that was previously dismissed.

In 2021, I was wrongfully accused and charged with a felony of domestic child abuse and neglect, which was ultimately dismissed by the court after almost five months of unimaginable misery. At that time, I was informed that the dismissal meant the matter was resolved, and it would not have lasting consequences on my record or future as my attorney filed paperwork to have the files sealed and removed from public access. As an educator, and currently an assistant principal at an elementary school, these charges impacted my professional career.

However, through a student in my building, I came to discover that files related to this case have been unsealed and are now accessible to the public. On several occasions I have had to explain the situation and speak to the legality, legitimacy, and implications of what I overcame: while re-living the nightmare. I'm fearful that at any moment, the existence of these records could result in damages to my professional reputation, possible career-advancement opportunities, and significant stress in my personal and financial life.

I would like to express my full support for the protection of privacy in sealed or dismissed cases such as mine. As someone who works in the public eye, specifically in the field of education, maintaining a positive and trustworthy reputation is critical to my career. The reopening of such files undermines the purpose of dismissal or sealing and unfairly penalizes individuals who rely on the confidentiality of resolved legal matters to build and maintain their professional lives. Protecting these records is essential to safeguarding the livelihoods of individuals in professions like mine, where public trust is paramount.

I respectfully request a Do Pass on HB1166 and the Judiciary committee taking action to address this issue. This legislation will further assist me in sealing the reopened records to prevent further harm to my livelihood and future career prospects.

Thank you for your time and understanding. I appreciate the opportunity to share how this situation has negatively impacted my life and ask for the committee's support in resolving it.

Sincerely,

Chrystopher Bitz

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CBitz' with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.