

Introduction—HB 1410—Study relating to criminal conduct against children

Representative Mary Schneider

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One of my favorite quotes is an anonymous one you have probably heard:

“A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove. But the world may be better because I was important in the life of a child.”

House Bill 1410 is one of our chances to make a difference in the lives of our North Dakota children at risk of victimization. The bill is a short and simple request for a legislative management study of state laws relating to criminal conduct against children, child sexual assault, and child physical abuse and neglect.

The study requires a review of outdated references and verbiage, and examination of state laws regarding AI and its new and extraordinarily dangerous role in sexual performances of minors and in prohibited materials possession involving children. It will review and possibly recommend changes in the investigation and prosecution of crimes involving physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect of children. The findings, recommendations, and perhaps legislation from such a study effort will likely require updates or action in the next legislative session.

Subsequent witnesses will better describe the need for this important study.

This bill originated with the Child Sexual Assault Prevention Task Force, a group that was created through a bill by Representative Bernie Satrom. It has done such good work that the Task Force has received funding and continued funding from our legislature. I am extremely proud of the Task Force, its extraordinary members and exceptional leadership. They represent a broad professional continuum of advocates for children and related cross-agency representatives of law enforcement, social services, prosecutorial and other justice system components. Representative Satrom, Senator Clemens, and I have served on the Task Force since its start. All members work hard to protect children and educate others to do so too.

I urge a due pass vote for this important review and updating of state law to help address the protections our North Dakota children need and deserve.

I am happy to address your questions or step aside for the skilled witnesses behind me who can.