

Chairman Longmuir and Members of the House Political Subdivisions Committee,

The North Dakota Young Republicans rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 3037 and respectfully urge the committee to render a unanimous Do Pass recommendation.

HCR 3037 was crafted by our NDYR Policy Team in response to the recent revelations regarding former State Senator Ray Holmberg's depraved life, and the systems that allowed it to go unchecked. While some political commentators have already attempted to sow division and distrust around this legislation, the North Dakota Young Republicans stand firm; this is a sincere effort to protect children, and we hope lawmakers will treat it accordingly.

As much as we wish it weren't the case, the sentencing memo in Holmberg's case made it clear that he hid behind power and privilege and that his status as a public official enabled, or at the very least emboldened, his wickedness. This is deeply troubling to us, and it directly affects our organization.

Later this month, we will host NDYR Day at the Capitol. Dozens of NDYR members, their friends, and families will be in attendance, touring the building, learning about the legislative process, and sitting on the floor with legislators. Many of our members have young children and younger siblings who we actively encourage to attend our events such as this. We believe the political process should be accessible to all ages. It should be something families can experience together.

We crafted this legislation and rise in support to take a stand for our *youngest* Republicans. It is not enough for us to return to our membership, as we hope it is not enough for you to return to your constituents, and say, *"Well, there was one bad apple. I hope it doesn't happen again. Just don't bring your children. Don't bring your younger siblings. There are a lot of rumors, but who can really know?"*

We must do more. We must take action to ensure that government is a place where every North Dakotan feels safe to participate no matter their age.

Our NDYR Policy Team made efforts to draft bills implementing many of the ideas proposed in HCR 3037 but quickly realized the complexity of the issue. We did not have the time this late into session or the resources to meet with stakeholders, refine changes to the penal code, or establish comprehensive oversight and reporting mechanisms. Simply put, we realized we do not have all the answers.

Our idea is simple, but to bring it to life, we will need your help, and the help of an interim committee, to ensure that this legislation is thoughtfully and effectively developed. We have focused on three pillars we believe are foundational to protecting children: Accountability, Oversight, and Transparency.

Accountability

As written in Luke 12:48, *"From everyone who has been given so much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."* Public officials are entrusted with the wellbeing of our state and its communities. That trust must be treated with the utmost seriousness. When that trust is broken, especially in crimes against children, it demands a proportionate response.

We have proposed enacting severe mandatory minimum sentences for public officials who commit or conceal crimes against children. In *Summa Theologiae (Prima Secundae Partis)* I-II, q. 87, a. 3, St. Thomas Aquinas writes: *"sin incurs a debt of punishment through disturbing an order. But the effect remains so long as the cause remains. Wherefore so long as the disturbance of the order remains the debt of punishment must need remain also."* Justice demands that punishment be proportionate not only to the act itself but to the harm it causes to the moral order and the common good.

When a public official commits or conceals a crime against a child, it is not merely a personal failure. It is a betrayal of the community they are charged with protecting. It erodes confidence in our institutions, undermines public trust, and leaves the vulnerable exposed. While these truths were in a recent case made painfully clear, they are truths that apply to all cases of crimes against children. We must seek justice that acknowledges these realities and holds public officials accountable for damage that extends far beyond any single act.

Oversight

This resolution calls for a very focused study. While we support all efforts to end crimes against children, the issue before us involves a specific and extremely troubling set of circumstances. It has become clear that the systems currently in place were not enough to protect children.

We believe that a Special Investigative Task Force under the Attorney General may be necessary to ensure that such treachery is not allowed to remain hidden. Public officials wield unique power and privilege. We must ensure there are systems equipped to meet that reality.

Transparency

Finally, we propose mandatory reporting requirements for public officials. It is widely understood that those in positions of public trust have an obligation to act when confronted with crimes against children. In many professions, such as law enforcement, education, and medicine, mandatory reporting is already standard. While such requirements may look different for public officials, we believe they are no less necessary.

Public officials often have access to sensitive or privileged information. Mandated reporting would clarify their responsibilities and remove ambiguity. I cannot say with certainty that such a requirement would prevent such atrocities, but I do ask the committee to consider: what if you or one of your colleagues senses something is wrong, but lacks the guidance or authority to act?

We are living in the vital fruits of what happens when the truth is hidden in darkness. A little light early on can make all the difference in protecting children.

The North Dakota Young Republicans have worked hard to start this conversation and come before you earnestly to hand off the baton. We know we are not policy experts, but we believe that through this resolution, we've taken meaningful steps toward protecting children.

Before submitting HCR 3037 to the House Delayed Bills Committee, our NDYR legislators worked closely with House Leadership and incorporated all requested changes which resulted in unanimous approval. We are proud of that collaboration and hope the committee will continue improving this resolution in whatever way it sees fit. NDYR stands ready to assist however we can.

We believe this study can begin to answer the questions so many in our state are asking: *How did this happen?* And more importantly: *How can we prevent it from ever happening again?*

The North Dakota Young Republicans respectfully urge a unanimous Do Pass recommendation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Derek Turbide

National Committeeman, North Dakota Young Republicans