

## Regarding SB 2355 Teaching “Intelligent Design/Creationism” in public schools

February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025

I write in opposition to SB 2355 which mandates the teaching of “Intelligent Design” otherwise known as “Creationism” in our public schools across North Dakota.

I am an ordained United Methodist pastor who happens to have a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Chemistry (BS Chem) as well as a Master’s degree in Divinity (MDiv).

While people of faith are free to believe in divine guidance to the existence of life on this one planet we all inhabit and share, that doctrine is a religious tenet of some Christian believers, and thus not appropriate for public schools which teach students of many faiths.

Creationism depends on a particular literal interpretation of the opening chapters of Genesis – a scripture sacred to Christians and Jews, but not necessarily to other religions. Creationism is not a valid or testable scientific theory like evolution, but rather a rigid adherence to a religious doctrine dressed up in pseudo-scientific language.

Intelligent Design similarly posits that there is some sort of uber intelligence guiding the development of natural systems and beings into their current forms. While the role of the basic scientific laws of chemistry, biology and physics is not ignored in shaping life as we know it, Intelligent Design adds a spiritual (therefore unscientifically testable or provable) force as the main factor. Thus it, too, is a religious doctrine and thus a teaching that interferes with the constitutional principles of the United States.

Should the public schools of North Dakota teach Deism – the philosophy that God is like a divine clockmaker who created and then stepped away to let the machine run on its own without further interference or interaction from the divine?

What about other religions’ teachings on how the world, nature and creatures came to be – say the teachings of Buddhism, Hinduism or Islam? There are students of these faiths in all our public schools especially in larger cities. Should their origin and creation stories be taught as fact, too?

While I believe that Holy Scripture is sacred and has authority in my practice of faith, it is not a scientific textbook nor was it ever meant to be. The Bible teaches about values and behavior – what is moral and immoral, good and evil, laudable and shameful. Even so Christians themselves do not agree on its interpretation and lessons – yet some in the ND legislature want to inject these debates into public school classrooms?!

Leave religious doctrines like “intelligent design and creationism” to Sunday School and teach secular science and established scientific method in public school classrooms.

Please oppose SB 2355.