

## **Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill No. 2355**

Chair Beard, members of the Senate Education committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Senate Bill No. 2355. My name is Mary Hoherz, lifelong life science, health, and physical education teacher, and I am here today to express significant concerns regarding the proposal to mandate the inclusion of intelligent design in North Dakota's science content standards.

Beliefs are beliefs; science is science. The role of science education is to teach students evidence-based knowledge, not religious doctrine. Teachers are trained to educate students in scientific principles, not theology. Religion should be left to the parents, not mandated within public school science curricula. Schools have always taught science, not religion, and our standards should remain based on evidence, not personal beliefs.

As an educator, my job is to provide students with the tools they need to critically analyze information and make informed decisions as they grow. I trust my students to engage with scientific principles and develop their own perspectives outside of the classroom. Theology courses are available for those who wish to explore religious viewpoints, but these discussions belong outside of mandated science education.

Teachers should be trusted to do their jobs. We did not go to college to teach religion—we trained to teach science. Science standards are designed for schools and should not be influenced by religious ideologies. If students choose to explore religious beliefs, they have ample opportunities outside of school to do so. The classroom should remain a place for factual, evidence-based learning, while religious instruction remains the responsibility of families and faith communities.

I present both sides of scientific debates so that, as adults, students can make their own choices. However, intelligent design is not a scientific theory; it is a belief. Schools are for education, while religious guidance belongs to churches and families. Mandating the inclusion of intelligent design in our science standards would blur the crucial distinction between faith and science, compromising educational integrity and setting a dangerous precedent.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to reject Senate Bill No. 2355. North Dakota students deserve a high-quality science education rooted in evidence-based learning, not ideological mandates. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.