

To Members of the Committee, as well as senators and representatives at large.

Hello,

My name is Dr. Andrew Larson, I am a resident of Grand Forks, in district 17.

I would like to take the time to voice my opposition to SB2244. This bill on its face presents what are arguably some reasonable things. However nestled in the body of the bill there are some unreasonable provisions that ought to be stricken from the final bill.

Firstly, section 1 Subsection 5, subheading d on line 10 of page 2. The ability for a parent to direct the religious upbringing of their child. This is a reasonable request, however there is at least one bill being considered in the ND legislature this session which would directly conflict with this provision. The ability for non Christians to raise their children according to their own religious traditions, while the state of ND would like to require the teaching of the 10 Commandments are directly in conflict with one another, as a result one of those two things must be stricken in order to hold any sense of logic.

Secondly, section 1 subsection 5 , subheading G, on line 13 of page 2. The lack of biometric scanning would presumably include temperature taking. How is a school nurse supposed to assess their patient without taking a temperature? Is the parent required to give permission in writing every time the nurse has to take a temperature? What about hearing and vision tests administered by school staff? This is an unnecessary hurdle for parents, and will only cause confusion. This confusion will in turn only impede our already over taxed school staff.

Thirdly, Section 2 subsection 2, subheading c, beginning on line 1 of page 4, ending on line 9. This entire section sounds like a good thing, allowing for parents to have more control over their student's education can only be a good thing, right? However, this provision would create an undue burden on classroom teachers and other school staff. Providing lesson plans for each individual students, and making them available to parents, and then if there are any questions, or objections tailoring lesson plans for that individual student? This is unrealistic on its very face. Nonsensical at best. Teachers are already being taxed to their limits, and are summarily under compensated for their work, and adding this heap of work on top of them will only worsen the teacher shortage in North Dakota, and further deteriorate the quality of public education in the state. Impacting the long term health of the economy and tax base in the state.

Fourth. Section 2 Subsection 2, subheading d, beginning on line 10 and ending on line 13.

This is discriminatory on its face. There is nothing wrong with alerting parents that their students will receive instruction in the topics of gender identity, sexual orientation, and the like, however require written permission to get that instruction is again needlessly restrictive. Allow parents the ability to opt their students out of that instruction if they so choose, which is a provision in section 2, subsection 2, subheading e. Specifically calling the types of instruction out as relating explicitly to the LGBTQ+ community, notions of gender, and identity, is blatantly discriminatory. Why not call out explicitly other marginalized groups? I am all for allowing parents to have some semblance of control of their child's education, however, being blatantly discriminatory against a specific group is objectively wrong.

Fifth, Section 2 Subsection 2, subheading G, beginning on lines 23 and ending on line 27.

This is blatantly discriminatory. Not allowing a child to use a name that is comfortable for them is nonsensical. If my son Benjamin wanted to adopt his middle name Shannon as his primary moniker, he would be in violation of the law. My son is 5 years old, and is not a trans person, but he would have to change his name at school because a group of lawmakers are afraid of a handful of trans kids changing their names to be more comfortable at school? Even if my son was a trans person, what would be so wrong with allowing him to adopt a name that is not his legal name? if it makes him more comfortable then what is the harm? Is it to protect someone who religiously does not believe that a trans person has a right to decide what to call themselves? If so why is that being legislated in the government? The separation of church and state is a thing for a reason. Is it possibly because someone may feel a little icky because that student wants to use a "non-gender conforming" name or pronoun? isn't a teacher's job to look after the well-being of the student first and foremost and if the student is more comfortable using a name that would go toward looking after their well-being. This is again blatantly discriminatory, targeting a marginalized group for no discernable legal reason.

Final thoughts.

This bill is riddled with sections and subsections that are blatantly discriminatory, and place undue burden on educators all in the guise of "parent choice" I am all for parent choice and parent involvement with a child's education. Many of the provisions in this bill are reasonable. However, the ones that are outlined above sour the entire bill.

Teachers already have a tough enough job, chronically under paid, stretched to their limits, and now the state legislators want them to work harder and do more work for their already

paltry salary. North Dakota public education is already on the downhill slide, and taxing teachers with more will only make it worse. Taking valuable education time away from students so teachers can make lesson plans for the one or two students with “objecting” parents. This law will only hurt students. It will not help, it will drive even more teachers out of the profession making school districts rely on overseas hires, which are becoming harder and harder with the national trends. Teacher shortages are real, and it will only get worse with the passage of this bill.

Parents should be able to opt their students out of things that they deem unacceptable. However, the burden should be on the parent not the institution. If a parent is so concerned that their child is being “Indoctrinated” then they can homeschool their child. Intolerance of any kind does not belong in the North Dakota Century code, and that is what this bill presents. Intolerance. Intolerance of the handful of students, likely less than 1 percent of enrollees in North Dakota Public Schools, that some hard line lawmakers are targeting.

Senators Paulson, Lemm, Wobbema, and Representatives Hauck, Steiner, and Rohr, are targeting children with discriminatory legislation. You are going after children because they don’t want to live as you see fit. This is despicable behavior, you are deplorable humans, and your ideologies are backward and belong in the dustbin of history.