

Chairwoman Larson and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Kimberly Hurst and I reside in District 1. I am asking that you please render a DO PASS on Senate Bill 2244.

I am a mother of four kids who have previously been enrolled in North Dakota public education. It is common to hear that school districts encourage parental involvement, but when a parent actually becomes involved they are either completely dismissed or even publicly ostracized at school board meetings for raising questions of concern; at least this has been my experience. This type of behavior from the school district towards a parent can either discourage parents from engaging in their children's education or, ultimately, motivate them to withdraw their children from public schools altogether; for me, it was the latter.

There are a number of reasons I support this bill and one important reason would be the parental right to request curriculum review. In October of 2022 I requested to review 2 of my 4 children's curriculum, and in return I was provided a fee in the amount of \$615.87. I encourage you to consider why a school district would impose such an unreasonable fee on a parent to simply review their child's curriculum. Furthermore, why was I being charged in the first place? To this day, the rationale for this fee remains unclear. This experience played a significant role in my decision to homeschool my

children. The lack of transparency and the disregard for my involvement as a parent significantly undermined my trust in the public education system.

Later that same school year, when my son was in 8th grade, I discovered that he was receiving classroom instruction that I had explicitly opted him out of. I had formally requested that my children not participate in social-emotional learning, yet the curriculum was still being taught in his health class under the label of “social-emotional health.” Upon addressing this with the school district, it became evident that they were unprepared for such a situation. After reviewing the health class curriculum, they recognized my concerns were valid but failed to offer a reasonable resolution. Their only alternative was to have my son spend each health class period in the principal’s office completing other unrelated work. The curriculum used in his health class directly disregarded my parental right to opt him out of SEL, leaving the only available solution to be his complete removal from the class with no credit earned at the end of the school year. It is deeply concerning that the school district’s best course of action was not to offer an alternative curriculum or accommodation, but instead to exclude him entirely from the class. If I am being honest, I couldn’t help but wonder if this was the reason they imposed a \$615 fee to review his curriculum that year; given that, if my son hadn’t brought this to my attention, I would have never known.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize the importance of obtaining parental consent prior to a child’s participation in any presentations or instruction

related to gender identity or the sexual stereotypes outlined in this bill. This issue navigates a delicate balance between moral and religious upbringing, and it should be exclusively the parent's right to be informed and give consent before their child receives this type of instruction. I would also like to raise the question: why is it necessary for schools to present, educate or have any knowledge of any child's sexual orientation or sexual relationships? How does this kind of instruction contribute to a student's academic success? These sensitive topics should primarily be addressed at home with parental guidance, or, at a minimum, it should certainly require parental consent if it is taught in school.

I am a strong advocate for Senate Bill 2244 and respectfully urge you to support it, as it will protect parental rights and promote greater parental involvement in their children's education. Thank you for your consideration on this important matter and for your dedicated service to the state of North Dakota.

Kimberly Hurst