

Chairman Wobbema and Members of the Workforce Development Committee:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed amendment aimed at closing public access to certain records of public employees. As a resident of North Dakota, I firmly believe that maintaining transparency within our government is essential for fostering public trust and ensuring accountability.

North Dakota's open records laws have long upheld the principle that government records and meetings should be accessible to the public, except where specific laws dictate otherwise. This openness allows citizens to understand how government functions are performed and how public funds are allocated.

The proposed amendment to close employee performance and discipline records is concerning. While I understand the intent to protect employee privacy, such a measure could inadvertently shield misconduct or inefficiency from public scrutiny. Transparency in these records ensures that public employees are held accountable and that any issues are addressed promptly.

Furthermore, exempting these records from public access could erode public trust. Citizens have a right to know how their tax dollars are being utilized and to ensure that public servants are performing their duties effectively. Limiting access to these records may lead to perceptions of secrecy and foster distrust in governmental operations.

In a recent article, it was noted that closing employee records could be helpful if performance-based pay is adopted. However, this perspective overlooks the importance of public oversight in performance evaluations, especially when taxpayer funds are involved.

I urge you to consider the long-standing values of transparency and accountability that our state upholds. Maintaining open access to public employee records is crucial for preserving public trust and ensuring that our government operates with integrity.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I trust that you will make a decision that reflects the best interests of the citizens of North Dakota.

Sincerely,

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