

HB1234

House Judiciary Committee

January 27, 2021

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Chair Klemin and Committee Members: My name is Mark Hagerott, and I am the Chancellor of the North Dakota University System. I'd like to provide this written testimony on House Bill 1234, as the NDUS and its institutions have concerns surrounding the effects of sports or "professional" sports betting as this could affect our student-athletes and opposed HB1234. As written, it is still unclear as to whether collegiate sports are included or excluded in the proposed language.

The proposed definition of a professional sport or athletic event described as "an event at which two or more individuals participate in a sport or athletic competition and receive compensation in excess of actual expenses for the individual's participation in the event" could potentially include collegiate athletes on full ride scholarships at North Dakota colleges and universities.

Last week, I convened a meeting of the eleven campus presidents and all eleven were adamantly opposed to this bill and requested that I carry this information to you.

Why, in general, do campus presidents pass on their concerns?

We believe that opening the door to college sports betting in our state could have massive negative implications to our students that put the safety and welfare of our students and even their families at risk. In states that have allowed this, students have been exposed to illicit agreements and financial benefits that not only put them at risk but challenged their integrity and the purity of those sporting events.

On the face of it, sports betting potentially undermines the integrity of the game and renders unpaid athletes vulnerable to money flowing through their respective games and contingent on their performance.

On behalf of the NDUS college presidents and myself, I respectfully recommend a “do not pass” on HB1234. However, should the Committee feel compelled to pass HB1234, I respectfully request that the definition of a professional sport or athletic event to be “an event at which two or more individuals participate in a sport or athletic competition not sponsored by a college or university and receive compensation in excess of actual expenses for the individual’s participation in the event.”

This concludes my testimony for HB1234, and I will stand for questions from the committee.

Thank you.