



NDSBA
NORTH DAKOTA SCHOOL
BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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HB 1339
Testimony of Alexis Baxley
House Judiciary Committee
February 15, 2021

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee, my name is Alexis Baxley. I am the executive director for the North Dakota School Boards Association. NDSBA represents all 175 North Dakota public school districts and their boards. I am here today in opposition to HB 1339.

Our schools serve arguably the most vulnerable population of citizens. Parents entrust their children to our schools to protect them and keep them safe from harm. If passed, HB 1339 will make it even more difficult for schools to keep kids safe and protected.

NDSBA opposes HB 1339 to the extent it seeks to remove “an athletic or sporting event” from the definition of a public gathering. The bill further amends this definition by replacing “school” with “school building.” This is problematic as it limits the restrictions on possessing a firearm or dangerous weapon to the physical school building. School sponsored or sanctioned activities occur in a large variety of locations, many of them outside the actual school building. There are outdoor events like football games and cross country meets that would no longer be included in the definition of public gathering. In addition, schools often host indoor events in facilities that are not owned by the district or would not be considered school buildings. A couple of examples of these types of events might be a graduation ceremony held at a community center or extracurricular activities like plays and student congress that might be held in other facilities within the community.

School districts are still charged with protecting their students in these spaces, and it is imperative that the prohibition on possessing a firearm or dangerous weapon continue to apply to all school sponsored activities.

NDSBA also opposes the removal of the items included on page one, lines 7-13, from the definition of a dangerous weapon. While most of these weapons are far less common than a firearm or knife, they are still far too dangerous to be allowed in a school setting.

For these reasons, NDSBA stands in opposition to HB 1339 and asks this committee to give it a do not pass recommendation. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.