

HB 1503
Senate Education
03/22/2021 – 2:30 pm

Chairman Schaible and members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Joy Dahlen. I currently serve as the State Chair of the North Dakota College Republicans. Our organization prioritizes the expansion of conservative ideals on college campuses, while granting students the opportunity for involvement in the Republican Party. Today, I ask this committee to further protect the free speech of college students across our state and give HB 1503 a favorable recommendation.

Currently, I am in my third year at North Dakota State University, in my first year of Pharmacy School. My involvement in College Republicans started as soon as I enrolled in college. I believe in protecting the rights of students to express their beliefs fully under the constitution without fear of recourse by the University. I have felt the need to hide my involvement with College Republicans from my college for fear of not being treated equally because of my political affiliation.

HB 1503 grants our students, student organizations, and university faculty the much-needed protections from violations of the First Amendment. While the opponents of this bill highlight the lack of violations and the redundancy of these protections, I would challenge that objection.

- 1) A lack of reporting does not indicate a lack of violations.
- 2) The Century Code applies to the entire state and is more ridged than campus policies.

No matter which public campus a student chose to attend, they should be subject to the same free speech protections. College Republicans currently have official chapters on two public

universities and one private university. Each of our members, at public institutions, should be allowed to voice their concerns without burdensome oversight and restrictions.

This bill allows organizations, such as the one I represent, the protections to continue expanding to other campuses. While we are in a time of division and tribalism in politics, it is important to hear all sides of an issue. House Bill 1503 simply places another layer of protection, to ensure our next generation is not subject to unreasonable and unconstitutional restrictions on their free speech.

College is a time where students can further explore their ideology and express their concerns with our political system. Whether you consider yourself a Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, or some other political affiliation, your rights should be protected. Our students need to experience the difference in opinion, the hard conversations, and the opportunities that student organizations offer.

Mr. Chairman, I ask this committee to give House Bill 1503 a **DO PASS RECOMMENDATION** and great greater safeguards for our college students.

I will now stand for any questions.

Joy Dahlen
President
North Dakota College Republicans