



H.B. 1503 Hearing

March 22, 2021 – 2:30 p.m. – Senate Education Committee

Jane Vangsness Frisch, Ph.D.

Vice President for Student Affairs

Chair Schaible and Committee Members: my name is Dr. Jane Vangsness Frisch, and I serve as the Vice President for Student Affairs at the ND State College of Science.

Serving in my role at a relatively small two-year college allows me to ‘wear various hats’ – including serving as the Title IX Coordinator, Student Senate co-advisor, Science of Leadership Mentor – just to name a few. Based on this varied perspective I am here in opposition of H.B. 1503.

It is through these roles that I am, along with my colleagues, able to encourage, educate, and foster freedom of speech and the freedom of expression among our students and on our campus. We do this through having effective policies that ensure free speech and expression is protected, provide avenues to voice concerns if they feel their freedoms have been impacted, and by offering educational resources on their rights through co-curricular programming and traditional classroom instruction.

I am proud that following the last legislative session, we were able to enhance our Free Speech policy – making it more clear and aligned with the enhanced ND University System (NDUS) policy. Most of what is encompassed in H.B. 1503 is already covered in those recently updated NDUS and NDSCS policies.

What is most concerning about H.B. 1503, as presented, is that it could have an unintended harmful impact on our students. As the Title IX Coordinator I recognize both our federal and ethical requirement to respond to students that are unable to access or continue their education because they are being harassed and/or stalked. It is my interpretation that H.B. 1503 would require our campuses to adopt a new, narrow definition of harassment which could prevent us from assisting or intervening if we are made aware of harassment and/or stalking as they are currently defined in North Dakota Century Code. It could also put us in conflict with federal definitions and requirements.

Our students at NDSCS have various resources that help them overcome non-academic barriers so they can access their education and ultimately be successful. One of these resources is a well-publicized and utilized “concern page” that allows students to voice concerns both named and anonymously (in addition to other avenues). As you can imagine, we get numerous concerns – from the brand of ranch dressing in the dining center, to roommate concerns, to much more serious concerns such as harassment. H.B. 1503, will impact our ability to respond to these serious concerns, and perhaps even impact our ability to operate the concern page – both of these results will negatively impact the students we serve in the name of free speech. However, during my tenure at NDSCS, and to the knowledge of my longer-serving colleagues, NDSCS has not experienced any free speech issues on campus – we have not had a substantiated violation of free speech, we have not ‘disinvited’ any speakers, we have not had

speakers 'shouted down', etc. In fact, NDSCS has a robust student life and leadership program, and our NDSCS Student Senate equitably funds and recognizes more than 30 clubs and organizations – regardless of their viewpoint or membership criteria.

We encourage, educate, and invite students to practice free speech and expression. Myself and my colleagues work hard to educate students on these rights and encourage them. It is my perspective that H.B. 1503 is redundant and unnecessary. More important, however, as presented, this bill will negatively impact our students by compromising our ability to address safety concerns brought forward by students.

I respectfully recommend a “do not pass” on H.B. 1503; I stand for questions from the Committee.

Thank you.