

Testimony Prepared in **OPPOSITION of SB 2340**

March 6, 2023

RE: SB 2340: Relating to required school counselors

My name is Erica Skoglund, and I have been a licensed teacher and credentialed school counselor in North Dakota for over 20 years.

One of the first things to consider with this bill is that all of the listed professional groups mentioned in the bill are valuable and provide important work in serving the students and families of our state. However, **those roles are not interchangeable**. Some facets of the work may overlap, but each of those groups do not receive the same training, follow the same ethical standards, or even provide the same continuum of care.

The best example I can give is from my own life years ago when my husband and I needed a fan wired into our bedroom. We asked my brother-in-law, an Electrical Engineer, to help us with the job. I have a general idea of what electrical engineers do, but not a complete idea of their scope of practice. My brother-in-law proceeded to FRY our electrical system in my bedroom. He is not an electrician. The electrician was the professional who had the correct training and understanding of the work to be done. The same applies to other professional mental health workers in our community. **School counseling is a specialized degree with very specialized training**. School counseling is deeply imbedded in the educational work, prevention, and meets the academic, career, and social/emotional needs of all students. None of the other professionals listed have expertise in ALL of those areas.

The second area to consider is that **school counselors serve ALL students** in their school setting, which is considered Tier 1 work. Contracting with a provider to come in to provide a select skill set of work would only provide for needs in the social/emotional area for students that are the neediest in the school setting (Tier 3), not providing any prevention work at all. Long term we will see MORE and MORE students with rising concerns because no one is present to help with the prevention work, which is done through classroom lessons on topics including friendship, bullying prevention, problem solving, academic learning skills, coping skills, self-management, career exploration, classroom readiness skills, refusal skills, etc.

I have seen the overwhelming support in our ND State Government to help provide opportunities for North Dakota students to become college and career ready. If we strip away at the Tier 1 support that helps create students with soft skills and provides them with opportunities to explore and learn about college and work opportunities, we will create a weaker workforce for our communities.

For all of these reasons, I am respectfully asking you to **OPPOSE SB 2340**.

Erica Skoglund

Professional School Counselor