

House Human Services Public Hearing

SB 2260 Opposition Testimony

March 22nd, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Emily Schaefer, and I am the high school science teacher at Glenburn High School in Glenburn, North Dakota. I am writing to testify in strong opposition to SB 2260. I am in my 11th year of teaching science in Glenburn, and I am deeply frustrated with this bill and the unrealistic expectations that it places on the teachers in this state. This is an example of a bill that I believe demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding by the North Dakota state legislatures about a teacher's role in the education of students in our state's public schools. This bill would severely limit teachers' ability throughout the school year to modify and adjust their lesson plans to better support the educational needs of their students. Students' education cannot be held to such inflexible standards, where teachers do not feel they can deviate at all from the plans they set at the beginning of the school year or must wait for weeks for approval from parents if they need to make a change to their planned lessons or activities.

Passing this bill would be setting up the teachers in our state for failure. The idea that a teacher, even if they only have one class to prepare, would have their lessons planned out so

rigidly with every possible resource they could even think of using for the entire school year a week before the school year starts is preposterous. The majority of teachers in our state teach multiple different classes each day. I have accumulated a plethora of resources in my 11 years of teaching, and each year I find new resources to include in my curriculum to replace older ones or use in addition to those previous resources. I often find those resources throughout the school year after attending professional development. I consistently tell my students when I am using a new activity, and that it may not work out but that is what happens in science. We try new things, and if they won't work, then we try something else. That is how science works and that is how education works as well. As a teacher, I must be able to make adjustments to my lessons based on the current needs of my students, not just what I think they will need in July or August. It would be a grave disservice to my students to just let an activity fail and then tell them we have to wait at least a week before we could try a different activity, if we can try one at all. Expecting that I would be able to have my entire school year planned out for the 5 different classes that I teach daily to account for every possible adjustment or modification that could possibly be needed is a ridiculous notion.

I create my lesson plans every week, based on the goals for my unit plan and my overall year plan to cover the science content standards. I base those plans on how the previous week went and why my goals are for that week and even looking to the following week. I used the curriculum adopted by the school after careful consideration and review. I look at the resources and lesson plans from the previous year from the similar unit, along with any notes

I made about those lessons, and make any changes that I feel are appropriate based on how the class is currently progressing. I submit those plans to my principal Monday morning, and by the end of Monday there will already be a change in what I had planned for the week. Maybe an assessment I gave on Monday in Chemistry didn't go well, so I need to take time on Tuesday to reteach instead of moving on to the next lesson. We all know the weather can cause issues. If our school starts late on Wednesday to make sure that everyone can get to school safely, I'm not going to have my 1st or 2nd hours, so now that is going to mean adjustments to the rest of my week. These are just two scenarios that would cause a change in my plans that I had made over the weekend to get ready for the week.

Parents/guardians have an important role to play in their children's education. Teachers need parents/guardians to support their child throughout their education in school, and communication about what is being taught is important. I prepare a syllabus that I go over with my students at the beginning of the year that outlines the topics and content that they will learn in my class. That information goes home to the parents/guardians, where they can review it and I welcome them to reach out to me if they have questions about the content. I want my students' parents/guardians to know what they are learning in science, and also understand the how and why behind my instructional practices and strategies. As a teacher, I am not trying to hide anything from

Teachers must have the flexibility to make adjustments in their classroom instruction and curriculum based on data they have collected in their classrooms. Teachers use all kinds of data to make adjustments to their teaching every day. It would not be fair to our students to restrict teachers to a plan they made in August and not being able to make the needed adjustments to their units in October for the benefit of their students. That is a point that must not be lost in all of this discussion about public education in the state legislature: the students. Every single student in the North Dakota Public School system deserves a quality education, and that cannot be achieved by subjecting teachers to such rigid and unreasonable expectations.

I have a Bachelors of Science in Chemistry Education and a Masters of Education In Curriculum and Instruction in Science Education. I participate in professional development each year to become a better teacher, so I can find ways to increase the educational success of my students. I talk to other science teachers around my area and the state to get new and different ideas on how to teach a topic. I need to be able to bring in those new ideas, make changes during the year to how I'm teaching the content to help my students become better learners. I have put in the work to learn and grow as a teacher; to understand when I need to make changes in the best interest of my students. I do that by taking everything that I have learned from my education degrees and applying that every day to be as effective as I can be for my students. It is all about the students.

As a teacher, I want to provide the absolute best educational experience that I can for each and every one of my students during the year. SB 2260 would seriously limit the educational opportunities for students in North Dakota public school and so I am in vehement opposition to this piece of legislation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Schaefer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E" and a long, sweeping underline.

Emily M. Schaefer

7-12 Science Teacher

Glenburn Public School