

CONCERNED  
WOMEN *for* AMERICA  
LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE

March 13, 2023  
Senate Education Committee  
Testimony in Support of HB 1265

Chairman Jay Elkin and members of the Senate Education Committee, I am Linda Thorson, State Director for Concerned Women for America (CWA) of North Dakota. Today, I am testifying for Concerned Women for America Legislative Action Committee in support of HB 1265.

As our state's largest public policy women's organization, we strongly support the provisions in HB 1265 as it meets the goal of providing quality education to a level of excellence in academic achievement.

My background is in education. I served as a speech-language pathologist in public schools for 26 years and received the 2015 Council for Exceptional Children Teacher of the Year Award.

HB 1265 provides content guidelines to our Life Science Standards and Health Education relating to "growth and development and human sexuality." It adds statements to be taught in the classroom regarding the use of digital imaging of human growth and development inside the womb to the Educational Benchmark outlined in our state standards.

First, I want to note the North Dakota Content Science Standards document was developed beginning in 2018. Superintendent of Public Instruction Kiersten Baesler describes the purpose for creating our State Science Standards in part of the [Forward](#) written in 2019:

"The North Dakota Constitution recognizes the importance of public education in nurturing prosperity, happiness, and a 'high degree of intelligence, patriotism, integrity, and morality.' Statewide academic content standards, and an assessment system that measures student progress, help us to reach these noble objectives. By using our new, challenging science standards to measure student achievement, we can monitor growth, address deficiencies, and ensure comparability of educational opportunity statewide."

Standards have been changed in the past. Seventeen changes are listed in the [North Dakota Science Content Standards](#) following the Introduction in the Documentation Revision Log found online. HB 1265 makes minor changes to enhance content by the addition of a "high-quality, computer-generated rendering or animation showing the process of fertilization and every stage of human development inside the uterus, noting significant markers in cell growth and organ

development for every week of pregnancy until birth” in order to provide a meaningful human growth development discussion in the Life Science classroom.

Animal and plant reproduction is part of the [North Dakota Life Science Education Content Standards](#). Adding “human growth and development” and “an oral, written or digital lesson, lecture or presentation about human biology related to pregnancy and human development inside the womb” to the benchmark in the Life Science curriculum provides students the current scientific evidence and should be provided in every school in our state.

Secondly, Personal Health (including Growth and Development) is one of the eight [Health Education Content Areas](#) outlined in the [North Dakota Health Education Content Standards K-12](#).

The first standard of the Health Education Content covers understanding concepts related to human growth and development, health promotion, and disease prevention. The Educational Standard is further described in Health Education Content Standard, 1.8.10 to be, “Explain the processes of conception, prenatal development, and birth.”

HB 1265 addresses the Health Education Standards to include “human growth and development discussion with ultrasound video showing the development of the brain, heart, sex organs, and other vital organs in early fetal development.” The specific language is related to pregnancy and human development inside the womb.

Lastly, on January 10, 2023, during a House Education Committee hearing, an educational expert, [Dr. Aimee Copas, Executive Director North Dakota Council Educational Leadership](#), was asked by Representative Eric James Murphy about the frequent occurrence of curriculum changes. Although HB 1265 does not require schools to change curricula, but simply adds language to our State Standards, Dr. Copas’s perspective should be heard. She said, “Our world is transforming itself in an amazing rate. The way that information is rapidly changing is transforming at an amazing rate...I don’t know that we’re ever going to see a time where curriculum shifts are going to stop happening. I’ll frame it this way too, when in health care do things ever remain the same for more than a few years?”

I agree with Dr. Aimee Copas in our rapidly changing world of information. North Dakota Life Science and Health Education Standards must include digital images of human development covering every stage of development in the womb.

Best practices in education involve using a variety of instructional methods for [multi-model learning](#). The digital presentation of an ultrasound video, showing a developing and moving image of a human being in the womb, will enhance the classroom discussions in Health and Life Science classes in a positive and meaningful manner.

Concerned Women for America of ND urges you to vote “Do Pass” on HB 1265.