

Testimony on House Bill 1398

Senate Education Committee – March 15, 2023

By Zoe Bundy, Senior at Davies High School

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Zoe Bundy. I am a senior at Davies High School and I recently served as the student stakeholder on the North Dakota Computer Science and Cybersecurity Task Force. Today I am here to share three reasons why you should vote in favor of House Bill 1398.

The first reason you should vote to pass HB 1398 is this bill will help prepare the next generation to better stand up to common and very expensive data breaches. From the workforce perspective, this makes sense. Last year I worked in sales at a local business services company, and part of our employee training was mandatory cybersecurity lessons. Each quarter we completed video lessons and quizzes to stay up to date on the latest scams and become equipped to handle any threats to our company. It was during this training that we were told almost all of the data leaks experienced by large companies are due to employee error. In a 2022 Data Breaches Investigation Report by Verizon, it was reported that 82% of data breaches involved a human element. By educating our future workforce, we can start preventing large breaches in company data; saving companies a lot of money and defending against illegal activity.

The second reason you should vote to pass HB 1398 is the alignment with the North Dakota R U Read graduation requirements. As students prepare to graduate, they complete mandatory courses – like economics and government, to prepare for a job, trade, college, or military path post-graduation. There is no better way to prepare students for the technology-focused workforce of today and tomorrow than teaching them about cybersecurity and computer science.

The third reason you should vote to pass HB1398 is that it can help students remain safe on the Internet. As a student who uses the Internet regularly for school and work, I want to be informed on the best practices for how to stay safe online. According to a 2022 study from Common Sense Media, American teenagers spend an average of nine hours a day with digital technology. Nine hours! Nine hours of opportunity for hackers to cause issues by sending phishing emails, or scam messages intended to harm others. Unfortunately, over this past school year, one of my friends was deceived and her information was compromised. Innocently, she was looking for a relationship over social media, seeking connection, when she found a guy who seemed safe. He asked for her passwords and she gave them to him. He then proceeded to message her family and other social media followers posing as her. Cases like this are common and students should be regularly equipped with the knowledge to keep themselves safe on the Internet.

House Bill 1398 would rewrite the narrative for students using technology. With an increased awareness of the risks associated with online communication, insight into the best practices of staying safe on the web, and more, students will be better equipped for the workforce, build their cyber awareness within the R U Ready Initiative, and remain vigilant while using technology. Students need this to be successful.