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Good morning, Chairwoman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee. I am Molly Howell, the Immunization Director for the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (Department). I am providing testimony in opposition to HB1200. COVID-19 vaccines are already not required for childcare, school or university attendance. The Department has drafted proposed amendments to address a couple of concerns we have with HB1200.

Section 1b prohibits North Dakota colleges and universities from promoting student vaccination against COVID-19 or other emergency use authorized (EUA) vaccine. "Promote" is not defined in the legislation. The Department is concerned that this may restrict schools of health, including medicine, nursing, public health and pharmacy from educating students regarding COVID-19 and EUA vaccines. Additionally, should a future pandemic occur where an EUA vaccine is available, universities could not promote vaccination to students.

Section 2 states, "Any political subdivision, school, department, or institution of higher education shall differentiate between recommended and required vaccination on any form." "Form" is not defined. As written, the language is too vague and could apply to all documents, including those for even adult vaccinations. This language may have unintended consequences, as immunization records include all vaccines an individual has received, not just those that are required. The Department requests this language be removed.

In conclusion, North Dakota Century Code already outlines which vaccines are required for child care and school attendance. This list does not include a requirement for COVID-19 vaccine. The current law also provides simple ways for parents to submit for an exemption. The language in the bill could unintentionally restrict immunization educational activities at the college level.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1200

Page 1, lines 15 and 16, remove “b. Promote student vaccination against COVID-19 or receipt of an emergency-use authorized vaccine.”

Page 2, lines 6 through 8, remove “Any political subdivision, school, department, or institution of higher education shall differentiate between recommended and required vaccination on any form.”

Renumber accordingly.