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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee,

I would like to thank the NDHSAA for all the work they do with tournaments and events. We do appreciate the hard work they put in so that these events can run well. It is obvious that the NDHSAA cares about high school sports and activities in this state, but I believe that some of their policies are not beneficial to students, parents, and families. **I am asking for a DO PASS on House Bill 1491.**

My oldest son was not satisfied with his welding class. It was online, and as you can imagine, it's difficult to weld online. My son knew that Kenmare, a school only 10 miles from our home, had a newly built shop with new welding tools and a whole variety of equipment. He also knew that the math teacher at this school was qualified to teach college calculus, and he was convinced that his educational opportunities were better in Kenmare.

I scoured the NDHSAA bylaws, talked with several superintendents, and tried to figure out how this would work. Unfortunately, the bylaws state that "transfer in order to obtain certain subjects" is not an acceptable reason to transfer and, according to the NDHSAA, my son would lose eligibility his senior year.

So we packed up our family of 6 and moved into Kenmare, 10 miles away from our farm, so that my son would be able to keep his eligibility. We had to fully vacate our farmhouse "lock, stock, and barrel" so we didn't violate the NDHSAA bylaws, and we were told that we could be turned into the NDHSAA for an investigation at any time.

House Bill 1491 aligns with the current NDHSAA policy of having to live in the school district to be eligible. The bill simply makes things objective and clear cut, instead of subjective and dependent on the NDHSAA decisions. Under HB 1491, the NDHSAA would not be allowed to

investigate if we had moved “lock, stock, and barrel” out of our farmhouse.

The most needed part of this bill is “the NDHSAA shall presume no recruitment or undue influence has occurred.” Innocent until proven guilty. This will be an excellent change in the policy, should HB 1491 become law.

The families and students are the ones who should be making their personal educational decisions, and we should not be hindered and penalized by the NDHSAA.

I have visited with numerous people who are disgruntled with the way NDHSAA treats so many high school students of North Dakota. The main reason this bill exists, and HB 1149 of the 2023 Legislative Session, is because NDHSAA’s primary focus is on preventing a student athlete from moving to a preferred team, and they often do not consider the other issues, such as education, family dynamics, health, divorce, mental health, etc. If the NDHSAA would take all aspects into consideration, this bill would not exist.

I would encourage the committee to watch the testimony on House Bill 1149 from the 2023 Legislation Session.

This bill is one of the first steps to help provide accountability to the unchecked power held by the NDHSAA, and to return the rights of parents and students to make their own decisions about their education, unhindered by the restrictive bylaws and investigations of the NDHSAA.