

2025 HOUSE EDUCATION

HB 1200

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1200
1/21/2025

Relating to the waiver and substitution of one unit required for high school graduation under emergent circumstances.

9:58 a.m. Vice Chairman Schreiber- Beck called the hearing to order.

Members Present: Vice Chairman Schreiber- Beck, Representatives, Conmy, Hager, Hatlestad, Hauck, Jonas, Longmuir, Maki, Marchall, Morton, Novak, Osowski

Members absent: Chairman Heinert, Representative Heilman

Discussion Topics:

- Situational education courses
- Clarification of language

9:59 a.m. Representative Louser introduced the bill.

10:01 a.m. Dr. Samantha Bryans, Dean of Academics for Bishop Ryan Catholic School in Minot, testified in favor and submitted testimony. #30464

10:08 a.m. Jim Upgren, Department of Public Instruction, provided neutral information.

Additional written testimony:

Amiee Copas, Executive Director NDCEL, submitted testimony in favor. #30202

10:26 a.m. Chairman Heinert closed the hearing.

Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk



1 **Testimony in Support of HB 1200** – School Board authority to waiver/substitution.

2 Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **HB 1200**, a bill that introduces an option
 3 for a local board to adopt a policy to allow for flexibility in rare circumstances with regard to
 4 North Dakota's high school graduation requirements. This bill acknowledges the reality that
 5 unforeseen, emergent circumstances can impact a student's ability to meet the rigid structure of
 6 current graduation requirements and provides a fair, practical solution.

7 **Key Reasons for Support:**

8 **1. Flexibility for Students Facing Emergent Circumstances**

- 9 ○ Life events such as family emergencies, health challenges, or unforeseen personal
- 10 hardships can significantly disrupt a student's academic progress.
- 11 ○ HB 1200 provides a **reasonable and structured pathway** for students to
- 12 substitute one graduation unit with an alternative course, ensuring they stay on
- 13 track for graduation without compromising their future opportunities.
- 14 ○ This flexibility allows schools to support students without lowering academic
- 15 standards or expectations.

16 **2. Empowering Local School Boards**

- 17 ○ The bill empowers **local school boards** to establish policies that accommodate
- 18 individual student needs, ensuring decisions are made by those who best
- 19 understand the local context.
- 20 ○ It maintains **educational integrity** by allowing districts to determine the
- 21 appropriateness of alternative coursework on a case-by-case basis, ensuring
- 22 alignment with students' post-secondary and career goals.

23 **3. Maintaining Rigor While Allowing Adaptability**

- 24 ○ The bill preserves the overall framework of North Dakota's rigorous graduation
- 25 requirements while introducing a layer of adaptability that acknowledges the
- 26 realities students face.
- 27 ○ Students will still need to meet core educational expectations but can do so in a
- 28 way that fits their unique circumstances, fostering resilience and perseverance.

29 **4. Supporting Workforce Readiness**

- 30 ○ By allowing substitution of courses such as **dual-credit or elective courses**,
- 31 students can pursue practical skills that align with career or technical aspirations.
- 32 ○ This legislation recognizes the growing demand for flexibility in preparing
- 33 students for the workforce, helping them acquire skills that are immediately
- 34 applicable in today's job market.

35 HB 1200 strikes the right balance between **academic accountability and practical flexibility**,
 36 ensuring that North Dakota's students have the support they need to graduate successfully, even
 37 in the face of unexpected challenges.

38 I respectfully urge this committee to support HB 1200 and provide students with the necessary
 39 tools to overcome barriers while maintaining high educational standards.

Chairman Heinert, and members of the House Education Committee, I am Dr. Samantha Bryans, Dean of Academics for Bishop Ryan Catholic School in Minot. I appear before you in support of House Bill No. 1200, which was introduced at the department's request.

On January 31, 2024, one of our seniors, Tyanna Weeks, was driving home from her shift at Trinity Hospital when a person under the influence of drugs and alcohol hit her vehicle. Tyanna suffered life-threatening injuries, and she was unable to return to school before graduation. After the crash, Tyanna spent three months at Craig Hospital in the Denver suburb of Englewood, Colorado. Craig Hospital specializes in brain injuries and neuro-rehabilitation. Tyanna had a collapsed lung, broken femur, broken ulnar, many facial fractures, and a traumatic brain injury. She was in a coma for two weeks and on life-support for three weeks. It was 1.5 months before she learned to communicate and eight weeks before she could eat solid food. It took four months for her to regain bodily functions and five months before she could walk again.

The Education Department at Craig Hospital worked alongside myself, our principal, and our teachers to ensure she completed her coursework to graduate on time. While Tyanna had a full 7 course schedule, she only needed a half unit of Economics to meet graduation requirements. While Tyanna was in a coma, I called DPI to see what we could do in order for her to graduate. I was told that Century Code stated that the graduation requirements needed to be met or she would not graduate and there wasn't any way around her graduating without finishing economics. Therefore, our econ teacher, myself, and my principal worked diligently alongside the education department at Craig Hospital to ensure that they were teaching the material to her and using head nods, lifting of fingers, and so on to answer the questions on assignments and tests. Before transferring to another facility in Nebraska, Tyanna was given a graduation ceremony by our school principal, president, family, and friends. With assistance, she walked across the bridge hallway of Craig Hospital to receive her diploma.

Prior to the crash, Tyanna was on pace to graduate at the top of her class with a 4.06 GPA and worked hard to graduate with 9 college credits—a number that would have been 15 if it weren't for the accident. She is a gifted young lady who prioritizes academics and other facets of her well-being that influence her quality of life. She is driven, smart, and inclined to be the best version of herself at all times. Tyanna was a member of the Bishop Ryan Catholic School chapter of the National Honor Society, a member of the Student Council, an Assistant Chaplain, and participated in various sports. Before her senior year, she sought dual credit courses to help her reach her goal of working in the medical field and attending the University of Mary. She could deliberate competently, set goals, and execute the discipline required to reach them.

Instead of attending the University of Mary, she is home rehabilitating her limbs and cognitive functions and coming to a sense of peace with the trajectory of her life post-graduation. Tyanna was fortunate to have school, family, and hospital staff who were by her side as she completed the necessary coursework to graduate on time despite her life-threatening injuries. Passing House Bill No. 1200 would allow students in emergent situations to fulfill required coursework under Section 15.1-21-02.2 with an alternate course. This bill would have allowed Tyanna to complete a course or course work alternative to Economics that would have eased the burden of completing rigorous work in her condition. Education is a fundamental right, and emergent

situations shouldn't keep students like Tyanna from graduating on time despite their hard work, docility, and courage to keep persevering through adversity toward post-secondary goals.

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

HB 1200
1/21/2025

Relating to the waiver and substitution of one unit required for high school graduation under emergent circumstances.

2:51 p.m. Chairman Heinert called the hearing to order.

Members Present: Chairman Heinert, Vice Chairman Schreiber- Beck, Representatives, Conmy, Hager, Hatlestad, Hauck, Heilman, Jonas, Longmuir, Maki, Marchall, Morton, Novak, Osowski

Discussion Topics:

- Committee action

2:51 p.m. Representative Longmuir moved a Do Pass.

2:51 p.m. Representative Conmy seconded the motion.

2:53 p.m. Representative Novak reminded the committee of proposed amendments.

2:53 p.m. Chairman Heinert asked the Representatives that made the motions if they are okay with changing to their motions to a 'Do Pass as Amended' (Representatives Agreed.) LC #25.0856.01001

| Representatives | Vote |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| Representative Pat D. Heinert | Y |
| Representative Cynthia Schreiber-Beck | Y |
| Representative Liz Conmy | Y |
| Representative LaurieBeth Hager | Y |
| Representative Patrick R. Hatlestad | Y |
| Representative Dori Hauck | Y |
| Representative Matthew Heilman | Y |
| Representative Jim Jonas | Y |
| Representative Donald W. Longmuir | Y |
| Representative Roger A. Maki | Y |
| Representative Andrew Marschall | Y |
| Representative Desiree Morton | Y |
| Representative Anna S. Novak | Y |
| Representative Doug Osowski | Y |

Motion carried: 14-0-0

Bill carrier: Representative Hauck

2:55 p.m. Chairman Heinert closed the hearing.

House Education Committee

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Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk

January 21, 2025

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO

HOUSE BILL NO. 1200

Introduced by

Representatives Louser, Bolinske, Fisher, Heinert, Hoverson, D. Ruby, M. Ruby, VanWinkle,
Richter

Senators Burckhard, Castaneda, Lemm

1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 15.1-21-02.2 of the North Dakota Century
2 Code, relating to the waiver and substitution of one unit required for high school graduation
3 under emergent circumstances.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 15.1-21-02.2 of the North Dakota Century Code is
6 amended and reenacted as follows:

7 ~~15.1-21-02.2. High school graduation -- Minimum requirements. (Effective through~~
8 ~~July 31, 2025)~~

9 1. ~~Except as provided in section 15.1-21-02.3 and subsection 2, the following twenty-two~~
10 ~~units of high school coursework constitute the minimum requirement for high school~~
11 ~~graduation:~~

12 a. ~~Four units of English language arts from a sequence that includes literature,~~
13 ~~composition, and speech;~~

14 b. ~~Three units of mathematics, which may include one unit of computer science~~
15 ~~approved by the superintendent of public instruction;~~

16 e. ~~Three units of science, consisting of:~~

17 {1} {a} ~~One unit of biology;~~

18 {b} ~~One unit of chemistry; and~~

19 {c} ~~One unit of physics; or~~

20 {2} {a} ~~One unit of biology;~~

- 1 (b) ~~One unit of physical science; and~~
- 2 (e) ~~One unit or two one-half units of any other science which may include~~
- 3 ~~one unit of computer science or cybersecurity approved by the~~
- 4 ~~superintendent of public instruction;~~
- 5 d. ~~Three units of social studies, including:~~
- 6 (1) ~~One unit of United States history;~~
- 7 (2) (a) ~~One-half unit of United States government and one-half unit of~~
- 8 ~~economics; or~~
- 9 (b) ~~One unit of problems of democracy; and~~
- 10 (3) ~~One unit or two one-half units of any other social studies, which may include~~
- 11 ~~civics, civilization, geography and history, multicultural studies, North Dakota~~
- 12 ~~studies, psychology, sociology, and world history;~~
- 13 e. (1) ~~One unit of physical education; or~~
- 14 (2) ~~One-half unit of physical education and one-half unit of health;~~
- 15 f. ~~Three units of:~~
- 16 (1) ~~Foreign languages;~~
- 17 (2) ~~Native American languages;~~
- 18 (3) ~~Fine arts; or~~
- 19 (4) ~~Career and technical education courses; and~~
- 20 g. ~~Any five additional units.~~
- 21 2. ~~If approved by the board of a school district or nonpublic school, a school district or~~
- 22 ~~nonpublic school may develop eligibility criteria or programmatic requirements to allow~~
- 23 ~~a passing score on the relevant portions of the GED assessment to receive credit for~~
- 24 ~~the corresponding requirements of subdivisions a through d of subsection 1.~~

High school graduation - Minimum requirements. (Effective after July 31, 2025)

1. Except as provided in section 15.1-21-02.3 and subsection 2, the following twenty-two units of high school coursework constitute the minimum requirement for high school graduation:
 - a. Four units of English language arts from a sequence that includes literature, composition, and speech;

- b. Three units of mathematics, which may include one unit of computer science approved by the superintendent of public instruction;
- c. Three units of science, consisting of:
 - (1) (a) One unit of biology;
 - (b) One unit of chemistry; and
 - (c) One unit of physics; or
 - (2) (a) One unit of biology;
 - (b) One unit of physical science; and
 - (c) One unit or two one-half units of any other science which may include one unit of computer science or cybersecurity approved by the superintendent of public instruction;
- d. Three units of social studies, including:
 - (1) One unit of United States history, including Native American tribal history;
 - (2) (a) One-half unit of United States government and one-half unit of economics; or
 - (b) One unit of problems of democracy; and
 - (3) One unit or two one-half units of any other social studies, which may include civics, civilization, geography and history, multicultural studies, North Dakota studies, psychology, sociology, and world history;
- e. (1) One unit of physical education; or
- (2) One-half unit of physical education and one-half unit of health;
- f. Three units of:
 - (1) Foreign languages;
 - (2) Native American languages;
 - (3) Fine arts; or
 - (4) Career and technical education courses;
- g. Any five additional units; and
- h. One unit of computer science or cybersecurity whether under subdivision b, c, or both.

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly

- 1 i. The requirements of subdivision h are waived if the student has completed a
2 computer science and cybersecurity integration plan approved by the school
3 board.
- 4 2. If approved by the board of a school district or nonpublic school, a school district or
5 nonpublic school may develop:
- 6 a. Develop eligibility criteria or programmatic requirements to allow a passing score
7 on the relevant portions of the GED assessment to receive credit for the
8 corresponding requirements of subdivisions a through d of subsection 1.
- 9 b. Establish a policy to allow a student to receive credit for no more than one unit
10 under subsection 1 for completing an alternative course, including an elective
11 course ~~and~~ or dual-credit course, if the student demonstrates an emergent
12 circumstance.

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1200**

Education Committee (Rep. Heinert, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS** ([25.0856.01001](#)) and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (14 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1200 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar.

2025 SENATE EDUCATION

HB 1200

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Education Committee Room JW216, State Capitol

HB 1200
3/18/2025

Relating to the waiver and substitution of one unit required for high school graduation under emergent circumstances.

11:31 a.m. Chairman Beard called the hearing to order.

Members Present: Chairman Beard; Vice-Chairman Lemm; Senators: Boschee, Gerhardt

Members Absent: Senator Axtman, Senator Wobbema

Discussion Topics:

- Serious life and health situations
- Specific class requirement
- Local district decision

11:31 a.m. Representative Louser, District #5, introduced the bill.

11:34 a.m. Dr. Bryans, Dean of Academics Bishop Ryan, testified in favor.

11:40 a.m. Representative Bolinske, District #40, testified in favor.

11:41 a.m. Jim Upgren, Legislative liaison and Assistant Director, School Approval and Opportunity ND Department of Public Instruction, testified neutral and submitted testimony #42454.

11:50 a.m. Dr. Aimee Copas, Executive Director ND Council of Educational Leaders, testified neutral.

11:54 a.m. Senator Lemm moved Do Pass.

11:54 a.m. Senator Boschee seconded the motion.

| Senators | Vote |
|-------------------------|------|
| Senator Todd Beard | Y |
| Senator Randy D. Lemm | Y |
| Senator Michelle Axtman | AB |
| Senator Josh Boschee | Y |
| Senator Justin Gerhardt | Y |
| Senator Mike Wobbema | AB |

Motion Passed 4-0-2

Senator Gerhardt will carry the bill.

Senate Education Committee

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11:56 a.m. Chairman Beard closed the hearing.

Susan Helbling, Committee Clerk

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
ENGROSSED HB 1200 ([25.0856.02000](#))**

Education Committee (Sen. Beard, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (4 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1200 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1200
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

March 18, 2025

**By: Jim Upgren, Legislative Liaison and Assistant Director of School Approval
and Opportunity
701-328-2244**

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

Chairman Beard and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jim Upgren, Legislative Liaison and Assistant Director in the Office of School Approval and Opportunity for the Department of Public Instruction. I am here on behalf of the department to provide information related to HB 1200, specifically what is currently allowable in law regarding our high school graduation requirements.

NDCC 15.1-21-02.2 lists the minimum coursework requirements that must be met to graduate from high school in North Dakota. Some schools set their own local graduation requirements that go above and beyond what is required in NDCC, but each school's graduation requirements must at least meet the minimum state requirements.

There is currently nothing in law that gives either the school district or the Department of Public Instruction the authority to waive or modify the minimum high school graduation requirements. This means that, if we are asked by a school if a required course can be waived, we are obligated to give them the information that is in NDCC, which does not allow for coursework to be waived. In addition, it is the local

high school that approves the student's high school diploma and transcript, and we at NDDPI do not formally approve individual students for high school graduation. If a school reaches out to us with a question about the graduation requirements, it is our duty to tell them what the requirements are, and the school's duty to implement it correctly for their students. Should HB 1200 pass and become law, we at the Department would be able to tell any school that contacts us during emergency situations that up to one credit could be waived if the school determined that there was an emergent circumstance.

We do have an optional high school curriculum, which is described in NDCC 15.1-21-02.3. The optional curriculum is designed to assist students that have struggled to earn a high school diploma. The optional curriculum requires 21 credits instead of the normal 22 credits, and also provides more flexibility regarding which courses could count for each content area. However, this option is limited to students who have either failed three or more classes or are ranked in the bottom 25% of their class. This means that a student in the top 75% of their class that has not failed at least three classes would not be able to use this option, even in an emergent circumstance.

Chairman Beard and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony and I will stand for any questions that you may have.