



TESTIMONY on HB 1205
from the
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS—NORTH DAKOTA CHAPTER
to the
Senate Judiciary Committee
March 13, 2023

Chair Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

The Advocacy Committee of the Board of Directors of the NASW-ND submits this testimony **in opposition to HB 1205.**

Book bans are undemocratic and are opposed by Americans of all political persuasions. Over 70% of voters oppose efforts to have books removed from their local public libraries, and more than 8 in 10 Americans don't think books should be banned from schools for discussing race and criticizing U.S. history, or for political ideas they disagree with.

The North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers is strongly opposed to book bans and educational censorship. At local public libraries and in schools and universities, **librarians are professionals who understand their communities, the needs of their patrons, and the difference between pornography and valid educational materials.** They, not a small group of ideological activists and influences from outside the state, should determine what books all North Dakotans have access to.

Much of HB 1205's reference to "explicit sexual material" appears to reflect the notion that libraries should not allow anyone to have access to visual materials related to sexual activity. This is an extreme disservice to anyone, young or older, who seeks to understand and engage in healthy sexual activity, especially if someone has no other access to this information.

The NASW-ND is particularly concerned that this bill is aimed at censoring information about sexual activity that the bill's sponsors believe is not "traditional" and heterosexual in nature. NASW-ND affirms that sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are real and irrefutable forms of identity, and NASW-ND stands strongly against any effort to deny these identities and to censor or ban information related to the healthy sexual activity of all North Dakota citizens.

Please vote Do Not Pass on HB 1205.