

Members of the Senate Education Committee,

It is my sincere privilege to provide you with my testimony today in favor of Senate Concurrent Resolution 4011. Thank you for taking the time to review and consider my words in this matter. My name is Brian Holte, a private citizen from rural Gardner, North Dakota where I reside on a farm with my wife and three children.

Our education system occupies a unique space within the developmental process of our children. School is where history meets present day, and where our students carry into the future the lessons of the past. Since our identities are shaped, in part, by our understanding of history and the beliefs and values that came before us, it should come as no surprise that the agenda of the radical left includes a rewriting of the history to be taught in our schools.

On the most fundamental level, I believe those who felt it necessary to write and introduce SCR 4011 recognize there are forces encroaching upon the traditional values of the United States and of North Dakota. I believe, as do many of you and my fellow North Dakotans, that the traditional values referenced within the language of SCR 4011 and the 1776 Commission are worth defending, protecting and passing on to future generations.

Much has been written about the divisive and destructive nature of the 1619 Project and Critical Race Theory. In these examples, the language and techniques used by the radical left to attack the traditional values prevalent in North Dakota and our schools is easy to recognize. It is critical to be able to spot these encroaching forces not only when they are contained to online news articles and elite coastal universities half a continent away, but we must be able and willing to recognize these encroaching forces when they are at our door.

With that in mind, please consider the following quote pulled directly from the KnowledgeWorks homepage:

“As an organization of privilege, we have not done enough to address the systemic racism and white supremacy rampant in our education systems. Words are not enough.”

Yes, this is the same KnowledgeWorks that the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (ND DPI) has tethered itself to since it helped craft and pass SB 2186 in 2017. The language they use on their website falls in line with the language used in the 1619 Project and elsewhere with the goal of transforming America. As an organization that openly calls for transforming our education system, is it too much of a stretch to conclude that by using conservative keywords like “innovation” and “local control” to push through legislation controlled by a Republican legislature? As is the case with many things from the radical left, our focus should not be on how their rhetoric and words comfort us and make us feel, but we must focus on whether or not their rhetoric and words produce an outcome that is consistent with our conservative and morally sound beliefs. If you believe that the 1619 Project poses a threat to our traditional values and our education system in North Dakota, then by their own words you must at least consider that KnowledgeWorks and their goals pose a similar threat to our schools and children – and we have already let them through the door.

In closing, please allow me to offer a final thought as to the seriousness of this issue. I was born and raised in the Gardner, North Dakota area. I specifically wanted my children to experience the community and values common to the area when I grew up there, so after college, marriage and starting a family we returned to what is now the Northern Cass School District. As you know, Northern Cass is one of the districts that has been outsourced to KnowledgeWorks as part of the innovation in education pilot program established by SB 2186 in 2017. As a direct result of these developments and what it has become, in the fall of 2019 I pulled my children from the school. While we remain residents in the district my children now attend a private, religious school in the area because that is the only place where the traditional values and education my children deserve exists.

I have read testimony from others within the bubble of academia that claim North Dakota needs to transform our traditional model of education to match the changes in society. I would argue that what our deteriorating society needs is the traditional values of our education system.

To help protect our traditional values and to help provide the best possible education to the children of North Dakota, I strongly encourage a DO PASS for SCR 4011. From there I challenge you to do more.

Thank you,

Brian Holte

KnowledgeWorks

<https://knowledgeworks.org/>

The screenshot shows the KnowledgeWorks website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'ABOUT KNOWLEDGEWORKS', 'OUR TEAM', 'RESOURCES', 'NEWS', and 'CONTACT'. The KnowledgeWorks logo, which includes the text 'CELEBRATING 20 YEARS', is prominently displayed. Below the navigation bar, there are three main navigation options: 'Get Inspired', 'Get Empowered', and 'Get Help'. The main content area features a large, semi-transparent orange banner with the following text: 'As an organization of privilege, we have not done enough to address the systemic racism and white supremacy rampant in our education systems. Words are not enough. See our actions and commitments »'. The background of the banner shows a collage of diverse people.