

Testimony HB 1447
Senate Government and Veteran Affairs Committee
Don Morrison, North Dakota Voters First • March 25, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Government and Veterans Committee, my name is Don Morrison. I live in Bismarck and am providing testimony as a volunteer for North Dakota Voters First. We are a non-partisan group of North Dakotans working to strengthen our democracy and to help make our elections and public policy more open, ethical, and accountable to the people and values of our state.

HB 1447 is needed to make sure resident college students in our state can have the type of identification that is currently required to cast their ballots in North Dakota.

North Dakota's recent law change to require strict forms of photo-ID to vote has caused great difficulties for those who do not have those forms of identification. For example, many Native Americans' addresses are not recognized and the state refused to accept tribal IDs. It has taken court action and a lot of hard work to mitigate that suppression of Native American voters.

The new voter requirements also have created confusion and roadblocks for student voters to vote in the community where they live. That is unnecessary. According to the Campus Vote Project, North Dakota is one of only 7 states which have strict voter ID requirements while also not accepting student IDs. Neighboring Montana and South Dakota have in-person ID requirements, but accept alternative ID including student IDs. Minnesota uses voter registration cards and does not require an additional ID unless the voter needs to register or has changed addresses in the past 21 days.

People in our communities should be able to vote without a lot of hurdles and roadblocks to overcome. We are pleased to support efforts such as HB 1447 that eliminate barriers and roadblocks to voting. College and university students are members of our communities. This is a good bill because it removes a roadblock for our neighbors who are college students and residents of North Dakota to exercise their right to vote.

North Dakota Voters First requests that the Senate Government and Veterans Affairs Committee give HB 1447 a DO PASS recommendation. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.