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January 28, 2017

Representative G. Mark Mickelson
South Dakota House of Representatives
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Representative Mickelson,

On behalf of our members and the students of South Dakota, the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) urges you to reject Senate Bill 55 that is currently under consideration by the South Dakota House of Representatives. The wording of this legislation clearly allows non-scientific explanations for scientific topics to be inappropriately introduced into the science classroom.

The language of the bill states that “no teacher may be prohibited from helping students understand, analyze, critique, or review in an objective manner the strengths and weaknesses of scientific information presented in courses being taught which are aligned with the content standards pursuant to § 13-3-48.” Although the language may seem innocuous, it specifically targets science courses to create the opportunity for non-scientific explanations to be introduced in the curriculum.

Scientific content must be presented as it is understood by the scientific community, and supported by experimentation, logical analysis, evidence-based revision, and based on detectable and measurable data. This unnecessary legislation would contradict and diminish the role of science in explaining our natural world by allowing explanations that do not fit the above criteria to be introduced. It would also contradict and diminish the role of – and accountability to – local parents, administrators and school boards.

NABT is confident that the students of South Dakota are best served when scientific integrity is maintained in the science classroom. We respectfully request that the state reject Senate Bill 55 in support of education that imparts to students an understanding of science based on the key components of the nature of science and content agreed upon by scientists and science educators.

Thank you for your consideration,

Susan Finazzo, Ph.D.
President-NABT

Jaclyn Reeves-Pepin
Executive Director-NABT