

HB1017 School Events Must Accept Cash

Testimony on House Floor

By Representative John Sjaarda

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Fellow Representatives, I bring before you, HB1017E

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today about an issue that impacts accessibility and fairness at our schools. This is a bill that requires the acceptance of cash payment for the admittance to a school affiliated event.

It was brought to my attention last year that some schools in the state were not allowing entrance into a school event with cash payment. In my local area, there are 4 large schools that do not accept cash.

In our increasingly digital world, it's easy to assume that everyone has access to credit cards, apps on their phone, or other cashless options. However, this assumption overlooks a lot of people. Not everyone has access to or wants digital payments. Some students, parents, grandparents and community members may not have bank accounts, credit cards, or smartphones.

Let me give you 4 examples:

1. Some parents want their children to go to a schools event without their smartphone so they will interact face to face with their friends instead of attached to their device.
2. Some young teens are old enough to drive to a school event yet they aren't old enough to have a credit card yet.
3. Some of you might have parents that do not...or you yourselves do not want to mess with technology that requires you to pay online using your smartphone. Some people say don't support an event that is cashless but in this situation where your kid or grandkid is playing or performing, you can't go elsewhere. That school event is where you want and need to be.
4. To those of you that say this needs to be a matter of local control, consider this...one of the good representatives in this room shared a story with me that he came a significant distance to one of these schools in the Sioux Falls area and could not pay with cash. As a parent who drove quite a distance across the state, he was not prepared for this and he didn't appreciate that he couldn't pay with cash.

By refusing to accept cash at school events, we unintentionally exclude people who need or want to use physical currency.

Cash is not just another payment option; if you look on a dollar bill it says "This note is legal tender for all debts, public and private." So if someone wants to pay with cash they should have the right to do so. It is legal tender recognized by our government. Even though I believe in a limited government, I recognize that this is a place where government needs to do its job. Cash is universally accessible and does not require technology, internet, or a bank account. When we accept cash at school events—whether it's for tickets, concessions, or fundraising

activities—we ensure that every student, parent, grandparent or community member can participate fully and equally.

Accepting cash provides a practical solution for young students who earn physical currency for small jobs or receive allowances from their families in physical currency. By allowing them to use cash at school events, we teach them financial responsibility and give them the opportunity to engage without feeling left out due to payment restrictions.

Some might argue that going cashless is more convenient or safer because it reduces the risk of theft or errors in handling money. While these concerns are valid, they can be addressed by providing a limited number of cash payment lines and provide security by having 2 sets of trained eyes on cash payments. I would also like to point out that we have been transacting with cash for about 200 years in this country so I am not asking for anything new.

In conclusion, accepting cash at school events is not just about convenience—It ensures that everyone in our community has the opportunity to participate fully in the life of the school without barriers. So I ask for your GREEN vote on HB1017E