



# North Dakota House of Representatives

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Committees:  
Agriculture  
Judiciary

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Chair Klemin and House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Ruth Buffalo and I represent District 27 in south Fargo.

As North Dakotans, we often think certain crimes could never happen in our state, especially not crimes based off your race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, or ancestry. Unfortunately, North Dakota is not immune to this behavior.

According to the United States Commission on Civil Rights:

“North Dakota has been notorious for high occurrences of hate crimes, ranking second with the most per capita in 2012, 2014, and 2015.<sup>1</sup> While the state reported a five year low of eight bias motivated crimes in 2016, some speculate that this is due in part to a three percent participation rate amongst North Dakota police agencies in the hate crime statistics reporting program.<sup>2</sup> While there was also a relatively low rate in 2017, the Bismarck Tribune reported that seven hate motivated crimes that occurred in Fargo had gone uncounted in the report.<sup>3</sup> Of the fifteen reported in 2017, eight were motivated by the victims’ race, five by religion, and two by sexual orientation.”

This bill is needed. It’s needed because every single North Dakotan deserves a good quality of life. Research shows the negative implications to one’s overall well-being after experiencing a bias crime. Public health implications of bias/hate crimes include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, heart disease and premature death. Individuals experience job loss, loss of income, that often leads to homelessness and lack of meaningful and adequate healthcare to address the trauma. Survivors of a bias crime have more long-lasting impacts from victimization than all other survivors of crimes. These impacts are felt by the whole community to which an individual belongs to.

A key component of this bill seeks to address the gaps within data collection and reporting. HB 1443 provides a comprehensive approach in addressing the issue of bias crimes. This bill will provide data collection of bias crimes, training to peace officers on bias crimes and a penalty to individuals who commit a bias crime. The educational training component of this bill is meant to educate law enforcement and help keep the public safer. Law enforcement is in support of this bill.

Together we can improve the quality of life for all North Dakotans through this piece of legislation by ensuring everyone is equally protected.

Please give a do pass recommendation for HB 1443.

I will stand for any questions.