

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1332. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

I think that it is very alarming that we are seeing legislation designed to overturn an administrative rule that the North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners approved. Social work is something you go to college for years to get a degree. It is something that requires continuing education over your career to maintain your license.

The field of social work is well regulated under its own ethics to determine best practices and do no harm to those it serves. These practices are defined and determined by individuals with decades of experiences, research, and often deliberated across multiple meetings, discussions, and months prior to changing or approving policy. Something that requires time, wisdom, and cool heads. Further the policies they create are subject to and need to change with new information and better research.

I cannot represent them better than they can represent themselves and they will represent themselves within testimony and to the committee that hears this legislation. What I will say is that if we pass this legislation, what is the point of our North Dakota Board of Social Work Examiners? What is the point of their process? Why even have a board? Why have a license requirement? Is this our answer to the social work shortage in our state? When the session is over can our legislators start taking clients and managing cases?

Perhaps I misunderstand the function and purpose of our legislative session, as I feel it is the legislative body that should listen to the needs of social workers when determining institutional policy or needed bills and not their responsibility to tell social workers what their code of ethics should be.

Regardless, I find it hard to believe a social worker would willingly practice conversion therapy. The majority of social workers I've encountered are incredible people. They care deeply, work difficult jobs, and cry with the clients they try to help. They encounter every kind of person, going through every kind of struggle. They sometimes see people at their worst. And they help them to find their best. In a very real way they keep the lights on in our state. (That's a metaphor, no shade to power companies, stay bright!).

I believe that realistically this bill serves to normalize conversion therapy as an option for parents who have transgender or gay youth and don't want to. And if they go through with this, they'll hardly have to worry about having a trans or gay kid anymore. I can't express how tragic it is that we've come here. That we've come back to this notion of praying the gay away. That we're trying to legislate normalization of a practice that has tremendous research showing the harm. There really isn't a debate between reasonable people on this.

When I first saw this bill, I was completely aghast. It would be like seeing a racial segregation bill being proposed again. I really had suspected we moved on from certain things and understood

the harm they had on individuals and communities. And I really don't understand how someone gets into the space where they've convinced themselves conversion therapy works, is good, or is effective.

I understand we have a lot of growing to do as a culture to really understand and become comfortable with transgender and non-binary population. I understand compromises that need to be made as we get there. This bill isn't that.

It is for all of these reasons that I recommend voting Do Not Pass.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state

Best regards,
Faye Seidler