

Chairperson, Senator Judy Lee, members of the Senate Human Services committee, I am Barry Nelson, here on behalf of the Fargo Human Rights Commission to testify regarding HB 1362, and on behalf of the Commission I urge you to vote do not pass on this bill.

The Fargo Human Rights Commission consists of [eleven volunteer members](#) who are nominated by the Mayor and appointed by the City Commission. Each serves a three-year term. The Human Rights Commissioners represent a broad range of racial, religious, ethnic, social, economic, political and professional groups.

Our mission is: The Fargo Human Rights Commission provides leadership and education in areas of civil rights, to eliminate discrimination against persons because of color, creed, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or marital status. It encourages adherence to civil rights through education, conciliation, and mediation. It identifies human and civil rights-related concerns of the public and recommends policies to the board of city commissioners that protect and preserve individual rights.

At its February, 2023 commission meeting, the assembled commission members voted unanimously on a resolution standing in opposition to the numerous bills targeting our Transgender community.

I submit the entire bill as passed, but for brevity today will highlight the following:

Our opposition to these bills is based on two principles: 1) it is harming our kids, and 2) it is restricting our freedoms.

In support of principle number one, I cite the following: National research tells us that 75% of transgender youth feel unsafe at school and are more likely to miss school out of concern for their safety. The North Dakota Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) data from 2021 indicates that suicide ideation and attempts are disproportionately higher for LGBTQ. Evidence is as follows: middle school students who ever seriously considered suicide: straight – 22%; LGB – 65%; Transgender – 74.7%. Middle school students who have ever attempted suicide: straight – 7.5%; LGB – 29.3%; Transgender – 46.3%.

Passing bills that directly or indirectly target LGB and specifically Transgender students only enhance this environment by further targeting them within schools and community.

It is within the overall context of the numbers and breadth of bills being presented in this legislative body, that we stand in opposition to HB 1362.

HB 1362 does not specifically single out LGBTQ individuals. We would support any attempts to support the role of loving, caring and supportive parents in relationship to their children. We further support efforts for parents and teachers to work together as a team making sure that the student is front and center in those efforts. However, bills such as this one serve to undermine the trust between teachers, parents and ultimately students and should be discouraged whenever possible.

The reality which this bill fails to address is when the relationship between students and parents are not supportive in the way that young people will grow up to trust loving relationships. North Dakota Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) indicates that many LGBTQ students feel unsafe at home (only 10% of LGBTQ youth speak to parents when feeling sad, hopeless, empty or angry); fortunately, many LGBTQ students look to school personnel for support (half of LGBTQ+ students turn to teachers or adults at school if they have a

problem); data from homelessness find that a disproportionate number of homeless youth are LGBTQ who have been kicked out or who have run away from nonsupportive families (20% of Trans high school youth reported being kicked, have run away, or been abandoned).

We are opposed to bills that interject government intervening to take away the ability for parents and teachers to work together as a team. We are opposed to government undermining the trust between teachers and students. Both of these government intrusions will ultimately work to the detriment of our students.

For these reasons we ask for a Do Not Pass on HB 1362.

The resolution as passed by the Fargo Human Rights Commission on February 16, 2023 is included as follows:

**Statement regarding the Homophobic and Transphobic Bills before the 2023 North Dakota
Legislative Session**

Fargo Human Rights Commission

Cody Severson, Chair

February 6, 2023, Passed at the February 16 Commission meeting

On behalf of the City of Fargo's Human Rights Commission, we submit testimony in opposition to the numerous bills targeting members of our Transgender community, including but not limited to HB1111, HB1205, HB 1249, HB1333, HB1489, HB1522, HB1473, HB1254, SB2260, HB1297, HB1474, and SB2231.

We know that the State of North Dakota prides itself on being an inviting and welcoming community and opposes discrimination. We believe these bills individually and collectively are contrary to this goal. These bills negate fairness and equal rights for all people in our state and counters freedom for individuals defining their identity and gender.

Our opposition to these bills is based on two principles: 1) it is harming our kids and 2) it is restricting our freedoms.

1. These bills do harm while at the same time seeks to limit proven effective lifesaving actions.

National research tells us that 75% of transgender youth feel unsafe at school and are more likely to miss school out of concern for their safety. ND local Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) data in 2021 indicates that suicide ideation and attempts are disproportionately higher for LGBTQ+ youth. Evidence is as follows: Middle school students who ever seriously considered suicide: straight – 22%; LGB – 65%; Transgender – 74.7%. Middle school students who have ever attempted suicide: straight – 7.5%; LGB 29.3%; Transgender – 46.3%. Our LGBTQ+ Youth are struggling with extremely high suicidality that is impacted by experiences of

bullying, lack of support, feeling unsafe at home or in school, sexual violence and being put down by parents.

As grim as these statistics, we also know what can positively affect these outcomes: the Trevor Project indicates that when a young LGBTQ youth has one supportive adult, it cuts suicide attempts by 40%. As simple an act as using the young person's preferred pronouns has profound impact as well, reducing the rate of suicidality by as much as 40%.

Passing these bills will have real and lasting harm to our children by further targeting them within schools and community. To further require schools not to do the kinds of interventions and preventions proven effective, borders on child abuse.

Restricts freedoms

In a country that prides itself as one with the most freedoms, in a state that values individuality and personal responsibility, these bills seek to restrict and limit freedoms: of health care providers who have taken a vow of "do no harm", of mental health professionals who are bound by codes of ethics, of educators and school administrators who believe in creating a safe learning environment for all their students. These bills not only attempt to erase our Transgender youth as a group of individuals, they will outlaw the care of nurture from a child's most important person: their parents.

This proposed legislation singles out school-aged students and increases the risks that students are not able to find a safe place in their school and community based on their identity. We believe these bills create additional barriers and causes harm to our youth. To keep and enhance a welcoming and inclusive community in North Dakota, we strongly encourage that these bills not be passed through the legislature.