

North Dakota House of Representatives
Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

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Vice Chair Ben Koppelman	Rep. Karen M. Rohr
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Rep. Jeffery J. Magrum	Rep. Steve Vetter

March 18, 2021

Chair Kasper and members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to speak here today. My name is Martin Fredricks. I am a husband, a father of three children, a lifelong North Dakotan and a resident of Fargo.

I am here today to testify in opposition to Senate Concurrent Resolution 4010, which would invalidate North Dakota's ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

I developed my testimony collaboratively with my spouse and two daughters, ages 19 and 13. They are all amazing, intelligent and strong women. I asked my wife because, through every day over nearly 27 years of marriage, our equality and value to one another have never been in question. I asked my daughters because this legislation, if passed, will negatively impact them, directly, immediately and into their futures.

Let me repeat that.

It will negatively impact my daughters, directly, immediately and into their futures.

It's as simple and straightforward as that.

In fact, it's as simple and straightforward as the language of the Equal Rights Amendment itself, which states:

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

This is not language that should cause any decent human being pause. In fact, this statement should be a given in an evolved society. It really should go without saying.

"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

Sadly, the long history of discrimination against women has made it abundantly clear that these words must be written down. More than that, they must be codified in the Constitution of the United States of America.

As you know, words and actions are powerful. What the North Dakota House says, what it writes down and how it votes on SCR 4010 will have consequences that reverberate through time, across this country and in the minds of all people.

If the North Dakota Legislature invalidates this state's ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, you will be telling girls and women they are not valuable enough to merit equality to men in the eyes of the law. You will be saying it not just to girls and women here, but across the entire nation. And, finally, you will be saying it to boys and men, too.

My third child is 17 years old, on the cusp of manhood.

If you pass this legislation it will be a strong message to him that no matter how much he hears about gender equality and equitable treatment, it's just talk. You'll be telling him that, regardless of what his parents have been modeling for nearly 18 years, none of that matters because, under the law of the land, girls and women simply are not as valuable to North Dakota and the USA as he and his male friends are.

How will that impact the way they view and interact with girls and women during their lives?

It will matter.

Invalidating North Dakota's approval of the Equal Rights Amendment will move us several steps backward. I'm asking that you, instead, send a positive message. Make your recommendation to the full House a reaffirmation of support for girls, women and, indeed, every one of us.

You'll be saying, YES!, I believe men and women are now and forever shall be equal in the eyes of the law. You'll be saying YES! to affording the dignity, respect and the equal shot in life that *every single person* deserves, regardless of their gender. And you'll be saying YES! to moving forward in our evolution as a society.

As I said, every single person deserves dignity, respect and truly equal opportunities. So, please, give this unnecessary, misguided and discriminatory legislation the DO NOT PASS recommendation that *it* deserves.

Thank you.

Martin C. Fredricks IV