



January 22, 2021

Human Services Committee
North Dakota Legislature
State Capitol
600 East Boulevard
Bismarck, ND 58505-0360

RE: Opposition to H.B. 1298 Relating to participation in athletic events exclusively for males or females.

Dear Chairman Robin Weisz, Vice Chairwoman Rohr, and fellow committee members,

The Trevor Project writes to express its strong opposition to H.B. 1298, a harmful bill which would effectively ban transgender youth from participating in school sports, denying them the health benefits and valuable life lessons of being part of a team and doing serious harm to their mental health. We humbly ask you to oppose H.B. 1298.

The Trevor Project is the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning) young people. We work to save young lives by providing support through free and confidential suicide prevention and crisis intervention services and through our education, research, and advocacy programs.

At The Trevor Project, we constantly hear from transgender youth in crisis who want nothing more than to be recognized for who they are — and we know based on the work we do every day that respecting and affirming a young person's identity is essential to their mental health and well-being. Denying transgender youth the ability to participate in sports increases the kind of social isolation and stigma that contributes to self-harm and suicidality. Conversely, our research has shown that participating in sports has positive effects, as LGBTQ youth who participated in sports reported nearly 20% lower rates of depressive symptoms compared to those who did not, and more than a quarter of transgender and nonbinary youth (27%) who participated in sports reported their grades as being mostly A's compared to 19% who did not¹.

Additionally, research shows that denying equal access to school activities adds to the discrimination transgender and non-binary youth experience, exposing them to "an increased risk of experiencing depressed mood, seriously considering suicide, and attempting suicide²." In Trevor's 2020 National LGBTQ Youth Mental Health Survey, LGBTQ youth who reported having at least one LGBTQ-affirming space had 35% reduced odds of reporting a suicide attempt in the past year, with affirming schools being most strongly associated with reduced suicide attempts³.

Finally, we hope the legislature will keep in mind the effect of its actions on LGBTQ youth mental health directly; over 86% of LGBTQ youth said in our National Survey that recent politics had negatively influenced their well-being. Legislation like H.B. 1298 is neither necessary or helpful⁴. We can celebrate girls' sports and protect transgender youth from discrimination, making sure that all young people can access the lessons and opportunities that sports afford.



For these reasons, The Trevor Project asks that you please oppose H.B. 1298. Should you have any questions, or if we can be of assistance regarding this matter, please feel free to contact me at 202-768-4413 or Sam.Brinton@TheTrevorProject.org.

Sincerely,

Sam Brinton
Vice President of Advocacy and Government Affairs
The Trevor Project

References

- 1) The Trevor Project (2020). Research Brief: The Well-Being of LGBTQ Youth Athletes. Available at: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/2020/08/31/research-brief-the-well-being-of-lgbtq-youth-athletes/>. Accessed on January 20, 2021.
- 2) Price-Feeney, Green, and Dorison, "Understanding the Mental Health of Transgender and Nonbinary Youth." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2020.
- 3) The Trevor Project (2020). Research Brief: LGBTQ and Gender-Affirming Spaces. Available at: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/2020/12/03/research-brief-lgbtq-gender-affirming-spaces/>
- 4) The Trevor Project. "National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2020," July 15, 2020. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/survey-2020/>.