

My name is Wess Philome, and I am an activist based out of Fargo, North Dakota, a place that I have called home for about 15 years. I would like to advocate my position, which is in support of HB1443. After the death of George Floyd, my call to action grew stronger. During this time, I would begin to face a rapid increase of threats to myself and others who worked alongside of me. At one point, death threats were almost received daily. I remember on two separate occasions I left my house only to see the same man in the same truck parked outside of my residence at 8 a.m. in the morning. The first time he drove off, a week later he stayed to insure that I saw him. While continuing to advocate for change there were many more incidents that struck deep to my core. I would come to learn that North Dakota did not have a bias crime law to deter those motivated by hate. Over the past 4 months we have worked diligently to draft a bill that would see to protect all people in our community from those motivated by hate. A focus was also placed on making sure that our law enforcement officers were properly trained to identify and track such crimes. This collaborative effort showed what it means to be North Dakota Legendary. It truly showed what we can accomplish when we come together. I hope that for the sake of better protecting all who call our great state home, that we can see HB1443 drafted into law. Thank you for your consideration.