

02/25/2021

**To:**

Senate Judiciary Committee  
North Dakota

**From:**

Naomi Tabassum, LPCC  
Fargo, ND

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Naomi Tabassum. I live and work in Fargo, ND. I am a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor and specialize in the mental health care of gender expansive clients. I am writing testimony to oppose HB 1298, and I strongly urge the Senate Judiciary Committee not to pass this bill. In short, this bill is clearly intended to attack and disenfranchise all minors who are not exclusively male or female regarding reproductive biology and genetics as identified at birth. This bill does not truly benefit anyone. As a mental health professional working with the gender expansive population, this bill passing will cause harm to individuals who may be biologically intersex and/or do not fit into the exclusionary definitions of sex as defined by the bill. It is not the responsibility of politicians to define "sex", but instead the job of medical professionals. This bill irresponsibly neglects the topic of gender, which contributes significantly to the expression of sex and social alignment individuals take within sex or gender categories, including peer bonding in school and as associated sports activities. According to the CDC, suicide is the second leading cause of death for minors under the age of eighteen. We also know that gender expansive youth have a significantly higher rate of suicide attempts than their cisgender counterparts. This should be a bigger concern to our state legislators that censoring genitalia on the soccer field. In the past five years, I have been made aware of multiple deaths by suicide of North Dakota minors who were transgender and/or gender expansive. Their deaths and as related mental health struggles were influenced by living in communities and attending schools where their gender was not honored or recognized. As a mental health professional, I urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to prioritize the mental wellbeing of its minor population over the flawed, misinformed, and divisive HB 1298.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Naomi Tabassum LPCC', written over a horizontal line.

Naomi Tabassum, LPCC