

March 15, 2021

Dear Senate Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for accepting public input on HB 1298. I am writing to urge that you vote against the passage of HB 1298. This bill is harmful to transgender and intersex youth. It also has the potential to harm girls who are not transgender but who are noticeably tall, athletic, etc.

School athletics in North Dakota are already well-regulated by policies regarding transgender athletes. For this reason, HB 1298 is a solution in search of a problem. Additionally, there is absolutely no evidence that transgender girls are overtaking girls' sports in North Dakota. Girls in North Dakota are **not** missing out on athletic opportunities due to the presence of transgender girl athletes. I say that we should allow coaches and school districts to continue navigating the inclusion of transgender athletes as they already do. A change is not warranted, especially a change to Century Code!

Transgender and intersex kids are like other children -- they have friends, they have interests, and so on. They want to participate in school life like anyone else, and sometimes that will include sports participation. Most of these children do not broadcast their transgender or intersex status for safety reasons (like avoiding bullying). By making such children play sports as the wrong gender (the one they were assigned at birth that turned out to be wrong), that would highlight their transgender or intersex status and would invite bullying. Most likely, if HB 1298 passes, transgender and intersex children will just opt to not engage in sports at all simply to avoid humiliation and ridicule from bigoted community members. I don't think any children should be nudged out and excluded from normal life like that. That's horrible and is not the kind of community norm that I will ever accept. Experts also tell me that HB 1298 is emotionally devastating and will cause trans youth to contemplate suicide. In some cases, trans youth may carry out a suicide. That absolutely breaks my heart, and it should break yours too. **Simply put, this bill has the potential to put blood on your hands.**

I also think that HB 1298 would inspire a culture of accusations. Girls who are not trans but who are very tall, strong, or competitive may be accused of being trans by their competitors or by bullies. That's not the kind of culture that I want my stepdaughters growing up in.

Ultimately, this bill is an embarrassment to North Dakota. It is clearly government overreach; thus, it actually violates conservative principles. It is repellent to people who know and love trans youth and serves to undermine our workforce development investments in retaining a capable workforce in North Dakota. A lot of really great workers want to live in a North Dakota where trans people are treated like the full humans that they are. "Brain drain" is a very real phenomenon in the United States. Why would we want to embarrass ourselves and drive away talent?

The social scientific evidence suggests that intersex and trans people have likely always existed and likely always will. A productive and pride-inspiring North Dakota – for the present and the future – will be a North Dakota where trans and intersex people are accepted and included. This kind of bigotry should have no place in our beautiful state. I urge you to do the right thing and defeat this cruel bill.

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