



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE TESTIMONY HB 1298  
MARCH 16, 2021, 2:30 P.M. CST  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
Peace Garden Room  
SENATOR DIANE LARSON, CHAIR

**SARA OTTE COLEMAN, TOURISM AND MARKETING DIVISION DIRECTOR-  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

Good afternoon Madam Chair and members of the committee, I am Sara Otte Coleman. I have had the privilege of promoting North Dakota, as the state tourism director for the past 18 years. I am here today to ask for your thoughtful consideration on how HB 1298 would impact our state's ability to host future athletic events.

While I understand the bill sponsors' well-intended goal is to provide a level playing field for female athletes, I also believe this work is being done by sports organizations that sanction youth sports in North Dakota and across the world. These organizations have dedicated resources in place to develop the protocols needed to establish fair and equitable competitions.

The amended bill relates to high school sports, however unintended consequences of the bill would likely result in our communities' inability to host youth regional or national competitions, as most of our sporting venues receive public funding. These events are also supported by local convention and visitors bureaus that have staff and sports commissions dedicated to attracting these events for the benefit of small businesses in their communities. This bill would make both hosting and sponsoring these events unlawful should even one of the athletes participating not meet the gender at birth requirement.

Sports tourism benefits communities statewide by providing visitor revenue throughout the year. This revenue helps sustain our world-class sports facilities which are part of North Dakota's sports culture that enhances our quality of life.

Our state has lost \$1.2 billion in visitor spending, of which \$94 million was from lost taxes paid by visitors, since last March. Please consider how this bill will negatively impact an industry so important to North Dakota's recovery.