

## **Testimony in Opposition to HB1298**

**March 16, 2021**

Chairman Larson, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Barry Nelson, I am a resident of Fargo, North Dakota, a lifelong resident of the state of North Dakota, a social worker by training. I am married, father of two and grandfather of four, soon to be five, all residents of North Dakota. I am opposed to HB 1298.

Never in my long, lifetime citizenship in this state, have I seen a bill that is so egregious, so hatefully targeted, and so cruel. As a social worker, I was just beginning my career in the state when the state passed the Child Abuse and Neglect reporting law. I personally investigated many cases of suspected child abuse, some of them dismissible, many too tragic to recount. Thank goodness, we had the force of law and supportive services to intervene. How does one intervene when the perpetrator is our own state, in the guise of policy makers who are intentionally targeting children, not only that, the most vulnerable children in our state. These are children already struggling with their own identity, with the cruelty of classmates and other community members to contend with. To further target and vilify this small but vulnerable group of children places policy makers and the state as the greatest of perpetrators.

We extoll our "North Dakota nice". Should this law pass, it creates a huge stain on the reputation of this state. My grandchildren are outraged by this action.

Vote NO on HB1298.

Barry Nelson

2850 Lilac Lane

Fargo, ND 58102