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Dear House Members,

I am the Medical Director at Canopy Medical Clinic, located in Fargo. Our clinic specializes in the medical care of LGBTQ+ individuals. I am writing in opposition to HB 1254, and I ask that you give this bill a **Do Not Pass** recommendation. HB 1254 seems to target one of our most vulnerable populations, which are our neighbors and community members who identify as transgender and gender diverse.

Our clinic treats individuals 16+ for gender dysphoria, using evidence-based medical guidelines. These guidelines have been put forth by numerous national healthcare associations and medical organizations, using decades of research on treating transgender individuals. As a medical provider, it is unethical to disregard medical guidelines that are effective and based on evidence. We know that treating individuals, both adults and youth, with gender affirming hormones and gender affirming surgeries is often the only way to treat their gender dysphoria. Research also shows us that these treatments reduce depression, anxiety, and suicide rates in all individuals.

I can not think of any other life-saving medical procedures or treatments that are criminalized by the State. I often hear arguments from non-medical providers that a youth's brain isn't fully developed yet, so we shouldn't be providing gender-affirming treatments. This hardly makes sense, as the medical community does not deny any other life-saving procedure or intervention in fear of a youth's brain not being fully developed. The decision for a youth to start hormones does not come rapidly or without input from parents, therapists and medical providers. When a youth starts hormones or receives other gender-affirming medical treatments, it is a carefully thought out decision from all parties involved, often with months of decision making and therapy before an individual receives a prescription.

To criminalize a medical intervention that has been researched for decades, ND would clearly be targeting a specific population of people for no other reason than misunderstanding, fear and prejudice. I have personally treated youth with hormones who have gone from severely depressed and suicidal, to budding teens who are able to live their life to the fullest once their body is being exposed to the correct hormone. In recent weeks, a parent of a transgender youth told me she has never regretted the decision to have her son start gender-affirming hormone therapy, but instead regrets living in ND where these hurtful bills are being introduced. Again, it is completely unethical for the State to criminalize a medical provider for providing care that is life-saving, life changing, and based on decades of research.

For the reasons listed above, I again urge a **Do No Pass** recommendation for this bill.

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