

Committee members,

I am writing to you today to oppose bill HB1474. The reason I am in opposition to this bill is to advocate for how we can collectively gather information about a grouping of people to help in ways they may need help for management of healthcare costs.

I work as an occupational therapist on an inpatient psychiatric unit (previously in the hospital acute care setting [ICU, rehabilitation, med surg, neuro]), and statistically speaking, people with mental health conditions have higher rates of comorbidities of physical ailments. Additionally, people that are a part of the LGBTQ community have higher rates of mental health conditions, thereby having higher rates of mental health and physical ailments comparatively to their counterparts. Removing our ability for data collection pertaining to this population will hinder our abilities to analyze and implement interventions to mitigate the need for extensive healthcare. This will likely increase length of hospital stay, increase the amount of costs during the length of stay, and impact the quality of care provided. If we are able to identify the needs of populations for people of all demographics, we can reduce costs associated with hospitalization.

I propose instead of removing our ability to gather data on non-binary and transpeople, that we instead create a novel category for statistics that help us recognize the unique needs of people within that demographic category. This could be an option versus eradication of gathering data of this population. We have the opportunity to create an individualized section for this gender identity.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our abilities to include people of all gender identities as representation of North Dakota.