

House Human Services Committee members:

I am a lifelong resident of North Dakota, raising 3 children in Minot and watching 2 grandchildren grow up in our city. I am writing to ask for a Do Not Pass on HB 1489, which bans transgender students from competing on the team that aligns with their gender identity in institutions of higher learning in our state as well as restricting the use of government property for certain athletic events. This is very similar to a bill that was voted on two years ago, which did not become law, and has the same issues that were present at that time.

If we start with the definition used to determine which sports team an individual could participate with, I would like to point out that the biology of sex/gender is not as simple and straightforward as some would have you believe (XY Chromosomes). It is a complex system that involves chromosomes, genes, neurobiology and endocrinology. I know it may be hard for those of us from a different generation to understand, but I think it is important to look at the science of today, which gives us a much better understanding of this complicated system.

This bill is again a non-issue and a bill to address a problem that does not exist in our state. The NCAA has spent a great deal of time and discussion coming up with a policy to address transgender athletes who wish to compete on a team that they identify with. This policy aligns with the Olympic (IOC) Framework for Fairness, Inclusion, and Non-discrimination, which is based on peer reviewed evidence-based research. I would encourage all of the committee members to make yourself aware of the NCAA policy as well as the IOC Framework. The NCAA Policy took a sport-by-sport approach to the issue and requires documentation of at least one year of testosterone lowering treatment as well as having the athlete meet the sport specific documented testosterone levels at the beginning of the season as well as six months later. This provides transgender athletes the opportunity to compete while ensuring fairness, inclusion and safety for all athletes involved. I am tired of our state legislators feeling that they know more than the experts in the field, who have spent years studying this issue. It is a waste of time and taxpayers' money to make a law to address a non-existent problem or one that already has a documented policy.

I have heard people argue that transgender female athletes always have an advantage over cisgender female athletes due to an increased level of testosterone, red blood cells, and muscle mass in the body. This could be an issue for collegiate adult athletes who did not transition until they were past puberty but that is the reason for the documentation of testosterone suppressing hormone usage for at least one year as well as the testosterone level of the athlete. Studies have shown that there is a dramatic decrease in red blood cells, muscle mass and strength within a year of the athlete using testosterone suppressing treatment. If the student is using estrogen therapy, this change is even more dramatic.

Contrary to some legislator's views, this bill does go against Title IX, is discriminatory and will make our state open to lawsuits. It goes against NCAA policy and the inability of our state to host athletic events that involved teams that allow transgender athletes to compete puts our athletic teams at a disadvantage and would cost our state revenue from the hosting of those events. The financial implications of this bill could be enormous as well as the fact that our state will be known as one that discriminates against a group of young people who have already experienced enough struggles in their young lives. Please note that the suicide attempt rate of transgender individuals ranges from 32% to 59% worldwide. With all of the bills

attacking sexual and gender identity this session, it will make these people more vulnerable to depression and suicidal thoughts.

Playing sports can provide student-athletes with important lessons about self-discipline, teamwork, success and failure as well as giving them the opportunity to improve their physical and mental health. Playing on a team also provides them a chance to meet other students and form lifelong friends outside of college. It teaches the importance of hard work, respect and acceptance of others. All students, including those who are transgender, deserve access to all of these benefits and the people who should be setting these guidelines and addressing the issue of transgender athletes participating in a sport should be the experts in the field, not legislators with a political agenda.

I find this bill to be discriminatory and a waste of taxpayers' dollars. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

Thank you for your time,

Jane Hirst
Minot, ND