

Dear Legislators,

I have lived in North Dakota most of my life. After college, I left like many young people of this state do. However, I returned because I believed this was the best place to raise a family. I no longer feel that way. I have one child in college and two in high school. My parents never wanted any of their kids to leave this state, but I have told my kids that there are better places to live. This bill is one of the reasons North Dakota is no longer an ideal place to raise a family.

I have long been an ally to the LGBTQ+ community, but their struggles became more personal for me when my daughter came out. It has not been an easy journey for my daughter and school is often a place of misery when other students ridicule them. There have also been days of joy, days when a teacher recognized their pronouns and stood as an ally. When a teacher uses the correct pronouns for my daughter, it does not affect any other person in that classroom, but I can tell you it makes a huge impact on my daughter. It's such a small act that makes a big difference. Using the correct pronouns says we are accepting you as you are. Isn't that what we all want? To be accepted as we are?

I have heard comments from some who feel their religious liberties to misgender someone are being attacked. I want to remind you that religion has no place in our public schools. I'm tired of Christians using religion as an excuse to mistreat people. Maybe I went to the wrong church, but that's not what I learned. As Christians, it's our duty to treat others with respect and dignity.

This bill is nothing but hatred and bigotry toward a small minority. This bill does nothing to help the citizens of North Dakota. Its goal is to hurt a specific group. Our young people will continue to leave this state, and not just those in the gay community, but also the allies that want to live in a more inclusive, accepting community.

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