

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1522. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

This bill goes against everything we know about psychological support of teenagers. For transgender teens, studies show that one adult using the pronouns and name they prefer can reduce their suicide rate. The trans youth data survey showed that 74% of transgender youth in North Dakota contemplated suicide and 46% attempted. If this bill prevents that one adult from helping these kids, the numbers could rise. If the point of this bill is to assist these teens in killing themselves, it has the potential to be effective. My church hosts our community's Transgender Day of Remembrance service each year. Saying the names of North Dakota youth who die from suicide because they don't see a pathway to functional adulthood amidst a state they fear is trying to kill them is one of the most heartbreaking things I do.

The state of North Dakota has a responsibility to educate all of the children of North Dakota, declaring schools to be free to transgender individuals does not make it so, it just means that schools become a weapon against the transgender students who must hide their identity in order to go to school. It is obvious that this bill seeks to destroy children, even to result in their deaths. The audacity to include private institutions in this bill, meaning not just publicly provided and funded institutions, but all institutions shows how mean spirited this bill is. If I had children of school age, this bill would make me pack up and move away from North Dakota, regardless of my child's gender identity. I would not want them educated in an institution in which it was against the rules, against the law, to simply exist.

Rev. Michelle Webber