

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Maura Ferguson and I am writing this testimony as a resident of ND and independently from my employer. My views do not represent my employer. I write to you today as a community organizer, a mother of three students ranging K-8, and as someone who cares very much about the LGBTQIA+ community.

I am writing in strong opposition to HB 1522. School systems should do all they can to support transgender and gender nonconforming students, not pretend they don't exist. This bill will have a deeply harmful effect on our transgender youth in North Dakota. A recent study by the University of Pittsburgh found that transgender youth are nearly seven times more likely to attempt suicide than their cisgender counterparts. According to the Trevor Project, LGBTQIA+ youth who were felt they were affirmed and supported by their schools reported significantly lower rates of suicide attempts. This bill would make it the law in ND for schools to inherently not be affirming spaces for trans youth. This is deeply harmful and has the potential to take lives.

As elected officials, you should be doing all you can to keep our youth safe. This bill will do the exact opposite. It is rooted in fear and is outright discriminatory. I strongly urge you to vote Do Not Pass on HB 1522.

Sincerely,

Maura Ferguson, LMSW
Grand Forks