

January 23, 2023

Re: HB 1522

Dear Chair Weisz and members of the Human Services committee,

My name is Kara Gloe. I am a mental health therapist licensed in both North Dakota and Minnesota. I work at Canopy Medical Clinic in Fargo, ND. Among the primary populations of people I serve are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, aromantic, and Two Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) folks in North Dakota – including students in North Dakota’s public schools. I am a former elected school board member and I have two children in public schools. It is from these intersecting experiences that I urge you to vote **Do Not Pass on HB 1522**. If passed, this bill would do irreparable harm to transgender students throughout North Dakota, infringe upon the rights of local school boards/school districts to make decisions that best reflect the needs of their students, and drive teachers out of the state. Additionally, it ignores the many nuanced needs of students, regardless of gender identity.

First, the data on the lethality of being a young trans person in the State of North Dakota is concrete. For trans high schoolers in North Dakota we know:

- More than half seriously considered suicide in the last year
- That rate is 3.3 times higher than their straight cisgender counterparts
- 30.4% attempted suicide in the past 12 months
- That is five times higher than their straight cisgender counterparts

This is data that focuses solely on youth in North Dakota is from the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. These are the stats before the 2023 North Dakota legislature introduced multiple bills either directly targeting or severely disrupting the lives of our transgender friends, family, and neighbors. **Further, peer reviewed research from the Trevor Project shows transgender children who have one supportive adult in their lives are 39% less likely to attempt suicide.** This bill would rob so many children, who may not have one supportive adult at home, of the opportunity to have one at school. It is not hyperbolic to say, this bill will endanger the lives of North Dakota students.

Second, local control is something the North Dakota legislature often touts as something it values. However, this bill strips that away from school districts. During my tenure as a school board member, we had a plethora of data at our finger tips. Data we used to make decisions on how to improve educational outcomes and the reduce opportunity gap. Is it not best for the institutions that have the data on the students they serve and the expertise in education to make decisions they deem most appropriate to reach their own goals?

Third, this bill will force teachers out of the state. I have heard about teachers who have already left North Dakota, because they do not feel like North Dakota provides a safe teaching environment. We do not have to search hard to see how laws like this have panned out in other states. Florida’s teacher shortage is so dire, they are putting people with no teaching education or experience in classrooms. The collapse of a state’s education system is a fast train to the bottom. Is that where we want to be?

Lastly, there are number of reasons children may need to use single stall unisex bathroom that have nothing to do with gender identity. Some of these reasons may include trauma, phobias, anxiety, etc.

Under this law, providing these students with this simple accommodation would be punishable by up to \$500,000 in damages.

Federal law requires public schools to provide a safe learning environment for every student. This bill would make that impossible in North Dakota. For the health and well-being of every student in North Dakota I urge you to vote **Do Not Pass** on HB 1522.

Sincerely,
Kara Gloe, LMSW
Canopy Medical Clinic