

Olivia Data  
Testimony on HB 1522  
January 24, 2023

RE: Testimony in Opposition to HB 1522

Good morning, Chairman Weisz and members of the committee. My name is Olivia Data, I am the Youth Action Council Coordinator for the North Dakota Women's Network, and I urge you to vote "Do Not Pass" on HB 1522.

The Youth Action Council is an organization that believes in empowering younger generations to participate in their communities and contribute to a brighter future. But for youth to be empowered, we first need to be safe, healthy, and comfortable in our own skin, and HB 1522 would put this all at risk.

No matter one's personal beliefs on gender identity, the facts do not lie. According to the National Library of Medicine, 82% of transgender people have contemplated killing themselves, and 40% of transgender people have actually attempted suicide<sup>1</sup>. Among LGBTQ+ youth, those whose identities are not respected by the adults in their life are almost twice as likely to attempt suicide as those whose identities are respected<sup>2</sup>. By prohibiting schools and teachers from respecting transgender and nonbinary students, HB 1522 poses a serious threat to the wellbeing of many children. This bill would deny students who do not conform to a gender binary the opportunity to learn and live in a community that respects them.

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<sup>1</sup> "Suicidality Among Transgender Youth: Elucidating the Role of Interpersonal Risk Factors." *PubMed*, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32345113/>. Accessed 23 January 2023.

<sup>2</sup> "Pronouns Usage Among LGBTQ Youth." *The Trevor Project*, 29 July 2020, <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/pronouns-usage-among-lgbtq-youth/>. Accessed 23 January 2023.

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By all accounts, transgender children pose no threat to their cisgender peers. I understand there are concerns about allowing transgender girls in women's restrooms especially, but these concerns are unfounded. A cisgender man seeking to harass women is not the same as a transgender student seeking to use a restroom in which they feel safe, and transgender girls who are vulnerable now should not have to suffer for future, hypothetical behaviors of grown men. I also understand there are concerns about the corruption of children. But an evolving definition of gender is far more indicative of an increasingly educated society than of corruption. Furthermore, if you are concerned with harming children, I ask you why you see no problem denying students their right to live safely as their authentic selves.

If we want to build a community of North Dakotans who are compassionate, healthy, and able to pursue happiness, this bill must not pass. Transgender and cisgender children alike deserve to be educated in a safe environment with schools and teachers who respect them for who they are.

I urge you to vote "Do Not Pass" on HB 1522. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me regarding my testimony.

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