

Senator Estenson and Representatives: Prichard, Frelich, Klemin, Koppelman, Marschall, Motschenbacher, Ruby, Tveit, and VanWinkle

68th Legislative Session

House Bill #1333

I am writing this testimony in opposition to HB #1333. The Legislators who drafted HB #1333 have clearly never been to a Drag Show and do not understand the people who appear on stage nor do these same Legislators even considered the Worlds history of theater.

How many of you even attended a Drag Show? I can honestly say I have attended Drag Shows and let me tell you what you would have observed had you attended this event with an open mind and approached the show with no preconceived judgements.

What you would have witnessed by attending a Drag Show is individuals who take their art and craft very seriously. These people do their act just as any actor on a Broadway stage or those in films. These individuals rehearse their acts, they wear costumes and do their makeup just like those who perform in New York or in LA.

Drag Shows are not perverse or obscene. In fact, if you would look back in history you would see that in 17th Century during the Shakespearean times, men often dressed and played female roles. Back in this era, women were not allowed to perform in theater, so men had to play the female role in plays. This was widely accepted and not deemed unusual or something to be concerned about. The term "Drag" is derived from the fact that men played and dressed as women during this time but this also described how the female costume would "drag" across the floor. Hence, that is how the term dressing drag came about. Men in this era also wore what we call tights now. Times have changed and with time changing so has clothing however more notable is the attitude and insecurity of those who regard men dressing in female costumes as unusual and highbrow.

I personally watched individuals get on stage and sing, dance, tell jokes and talk with those of us in the audience. The audience enjoyed the performances and the actors, in turn, performed their hearts out. At the end of the show, everyone was clapping and standing on their feet as all the performers came back on stage to close the show. There wasn't anything harmful or inappropriate about the show I attended, and I also took my daughter.

I wanted my daughter to see this performance and have her experience a show that highlighted people who dressed in drag. I wanted my daughter to see that there isn't anything wrong with the

performances or the performers. Unfortunately, what is wrong is the attitude and mindset of those who judge people who make a living dressing up and performing as the opposite sex. I believe in keeping an open mind, experiencing different cultures and events that are new and different to me. I believe it's when a person experiences something new and different that there is learning being done and we all know knowledge is power. The Legislators have no right thinking they can tell a parent that they can't take their own child to a Drag Show which is theater. The Legislators assumptions that they know what's best for the citizens of North Dakota. It's these same Legislators that have no firsthand experience at such a show or that they believe children shouldn't be exposed to shows that the child's parent deems acceptable. There is nothing harming children here and what is seen on stage is also seen on TV, in movies, on print Ads and even in games played on gaming devices every day in North Dakota.

Why do the Legislators believe they can keep people from earning a living doing an honest day's work? Drag Shows are no different than the plays that get performed every year in North Dakota. The only difference is that Legislators are focusing in on who might the actors be and who might attend the shows. Well, heterosexuals attend Drag Shows along with those who identify as being in the LGBTQAI community. Men and women who identify as being straight attend these shows and enjoy them. This is theater. The actors are professionals. There is no reason to be afraid of Drag Shows and those who perform in the shows. I also do not believe that the Legislators have a need to eliminate a show that many citizens of North Dakota like to attend. These shows are for entertainment purposes and to go to the extreme to eliminate them or regulate them smacks of a group of people who think they are the social consciousness for the state but they are not. If you do not like Drag Shows, then don't attend them but eliminating them altogether because of your lack of appreciation for the shows that is wrong and no one should eliminate anything because of a group who remains to be ignorant and close minded.

Being different is what makes this world interesting and what God intended. If God wanted us all to like the same thing and have no different interest then this World would have a lot less choice in books, movies, songs, poetry, plays, etc. Differences in this world should be applauded and accepted. It's these differences that gave us Vaudeville in the 20th Century and we saw movies like "Some Like it Hot" a movie classic with Jack Lemon and Tony Curtis dressing in Drag. Flip Wilson dressed as Geraldine Jones on TV, Monty Python dressed in Drag and even Curly from the Three Stooges dressed in Drag. Even cartoon characters such as Bugs Bunny from Looney Toons dress in Drag.

Let people earn a living. This is NOT harming anyone. If you don't want to see a Drag Show then don't attend one but do not take away a form of entertainment that many do enjoy. Once you start playing entertainment police where does it stop? Books, movies, poetry, songs, magazines, sports? The citizens of North Dakota can decide for themselves what entertainment they want to watch and take their children too. Legislators should focus on running the state and not what its citizens watch.

Thank you, Kristie Miller