

Dear Chair Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to House Bill 1333. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

As pastor of People's United Church of Christ, this will negatively affect our outreach to our community. Persons in the drag community are often a part of the LGBTQ community. People's UCC has a particular call to be in ministry with that community and to make the church a welcoming and affirming place for all people who seek a relationship with God. We also seek to engage the wider community to create acceptance for people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

To that end, we sponsor an annual all-ages Gospel Drag Festival.. This is the major fundraiser for our congregation each year. More importantly, we show the love of God to adult members of the LGBTQ community and help children to see that God's love is available to everyone. For children, teens, and even adults who have felt rejected by the church get to experience a faith community that loves them.

At last year's festival, one of the children was in awe of the dancing of the performers. There was one performer who was well over six feet tall, and at first their height was a little intimidating to the child. But as they watched and saw the enthusiasm with which that entertainer performed, they said to their parent, "Mommy, she's so brave. She's on those high heels and is dancing for us!"

There were all types of families present, some families that have felt cut off from the church, yet that evening they felt that they had found new community with God's people.

We look forward to this year's Drag Gospel Festival to be held don Tuesday, February 21. That is Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday. The next day is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. At the end of the Festival, we will move into a liturgy of imposing Glitter + Ash as we begin the Lenten journey together.

This year the event will be in Moorhead, MN. The reason is two-fold. We are currently worshipping in the chapel at First Congregational United Church of Christ and they have welcomed this event to their fellowship all. But we also do not feel safe in having this joyous Christian celebration in the state of North Dakota where the majority of our parishioners live.

Please embrace the legendary welcome that North Dakota should be known for and recommend that House Bill 1333 as a "Do Not Pass."

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state

Best regards,