

Committee members,

I am opposing bill HB 1333 for the following reasons. As an occupational therapist, we recognize the importance of mind-body-spirit connection to promote a sense of well-being. We all as humans connect to those three elements of ourselves in varying ways. What I may enjoy as a way to spend my time versus how another person chooses to connect to their body varies. Rates of substance misuse is higher amongst the LGBTQ population and we may often hear individuals speak of a dissonance between the mind-body-spirit leading to a need to fill a vacancy in their realm of well-being.

For a person to be able to use their body in a way of self-expression to what is meaningful to them, provides an option to fill vacancies in a constructive versus destructive way (substance misuse). Providing penalties on how a person chooses to spend their time through self-expression will not stop the acts from happening, it will create shame for engagement in the acts. For those of us that are familiar with mental health, we know that shame is the root of substance misuse. North Dakota has one of the highest rates of binge drinking and alcoholism in the country. By putting this bill in place, we will certainly perpetuate what is already an area that we are not addressing for the people in our state.

Instead of blocking people from being seen, let's allow them visibility. Generally when a person is on a stage that's what they're looking for in fulfillment right? To be seen. Let's let people be seen for who they are.

Thank you for your time.