

HB1537 Bias Crimes Bill
House Judiciary Committee
February 7, 2023
Testimony in Support by Nancy Guy

Good morning, Chairman Klemin and Committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1537 on Bias Crimes. My name is Nancy Guy and I am a resident of District 47 here in Bismarck.

Earlier this year, I completed 8 years of service as a Bismarck City Commissioner. As an elected City official, I wanted our community to be welcoming and for all our residents to feel safe and welcome as they worked, played and raised their families in our community. Over that period of 8 years, members of most of the groups protected by this legislation spoke to me about crimes committed against them that would likely have been actionable under this proposed statute. The City had no way to help them and the states attorney had no way to specifically address this kind of crime. Each of these Bismarck residents declined to press charges because they didn't think they would be heard or believed and felt their situation with the perpetrator would become worse.

Everywhere I turn, I hear conversations about all the open jobs and how badly we need people to move to North Dakota to fill those jobs. Bismarck is no exception to that work force shortage. How do we expect people to move to Bismarck, or anywhere in North Dakota, if they can't feel safe and protected?

An oppression can't be addressed if it can't be identified and quantified. HB1537 identifies these crimes as bias crimes, requires training to enable law enforcement officers to identify bias crimes and work with the victims, and requires reporting so the Attorney General has an accurate portrayal of the size of the problem.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support and I urge you to vote DO PASS on HB 1537.

Are there any questions for me?