

Chairman Klemin and Committee Members,

I strongly urge a Do Pass on HB1537.

Hate and bias crimes are especially damaging to their victims and to the social fabric of our communities, yet our existing statutes are vague and make it more difficult to address these crimes. HB 1537 helps to ensure that our peace officers are trained to respond appropriately to these crimes, and gives them clearer guidance on what crimes fall under this category, making their job easier. While we might prefer to believe that bias-related crimes do not happen here in North Dakota, I have several New American friends who have experienced harassment based on their race and ethnicity while living here in Bismarck. As North Dakota seeks to attract and retain new citizens, protecting the well-being of diverse groups of people in our state from bias-related crimes is essential to creating the strong, vibrant communities necessary for our future.

I urge you to take the next step in advancing the wellbeing of all the citizens of North Dakota by passing HB1537.

Thank you,
Rev. Sylvia Bull