

TESTIMONY on HB 1537
ND House Judiciary Committee
February 7, 2023

Dear Chair Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

I submit this testimony in support of House Bill 1537. I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective.

The Air Force brought me to North Dakota in 2007 as an Air Force spouse and Air Force veteran. I owned a successful photography business that I recently closed to attend the Minot State social work program. I occupy several board positions with the National Association of Social Work and I am completing internships at High Plains Fair Housing Center and the North Dakota Human Rights Coalition. Additionally, I have served on the board of the Taube Art Museum since 2016, including serving four years as board president. Our family has been active in our community with volunteerism in and outside the church, both in Minot and Grand Forks, since moving to North Dakota.

I strongly urge your support for HB1537. I believe this bill will help ND because we have seen division growing in our country at an alarming rate. I am attaching an [extensive study](#) from 2018 which linked hate crime violence to social media usage. The findings are not that social media usage increases violence, but that repeated rhetoric by politicians, public figures, and/or the media **empowers and emboldens** people who share those views to act on them.

Since the last time you heard testimony on a similar bill, we have only seen an increase in the polarization in the U.S. To add to that, we currently have 21 anti-transgender bills being presented during this legislative session. If you have not had the opportunity to listen to some of the testimony presented to the House Human Services Committee, I highly recommend it. It is important to listen to the lived experiences contrasted with the rhetoric from bill proponents.

There are citizens in your state who are transgender. They are begging this legislature to recognize their rights. The Declaration of Independence states all persons are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Trans people simply aren't asking to pursue happiness at this point. They aren't even really asking for much liberty – they are still on the life part. They are fighting for their lives.

Undoubtedly, one of the 21 trans bills *will* pass. We hear from testimony that there are residents of this state who do not want them here, who even refuse to acknowledge their existence. Trans people have heard the rhetoric, both in testimony and in the media. They are watching these bills CLOSELY. They feel the danger daily. For this reason, trans people need this bill.

Let's also acknowledge that we are on Native American land today. This second group *needs* this bill, this protection. Our Indigenous neighbors suffer many abuses; abuses to which our government often turns a blind eye. This committee, rather, this entire legislative body, could not fully rectify the abuses they've suffered and continue to suffer. Just last week during a Jamestown vs. Bismarck high school basketball game, multiple racial incidents occurred involving slurs and exceptionally offensive sound effects. I am asking you to do a small act in a long journey of reparations to our Indigenous neighbors whose land we stole – offer them a small protection and acknowledge their struggle. Our Native American neighbors need this bill.

For these reasons and many others, I strongly urge you to vote **DO PASS on HB 1537**. Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state.

Mandi Carroll