

Dear Chair Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My testimony is in support of House Bill 1537. I ask that you give this bill a Do Pass.

The reason for this is that this bill impacts the people I care about, it will help make many of my loved ones feel safer living in North Dakota. It puts more definition on what would be considered a hate crime on a level and federal level. It puts efforts forward into collecting data when such things as a Bias or Hate Incident happen. North Dakota is one of the very few states that does not require data collection. That means we do not even have an estimate on if a bias or hate incident. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in 2020 there were 29 cases of types of crimes (persons, property, and society) committed in North Dakota. Yet, with those 29 cases, there were 17 of them with bias motivation being of race/ethnicity/ancestry I'm not sure if you are curious, but it makes me wonder how many go unreported. Or even how much more as of 2022.

Not only will collecting data help, but I believe this will help North Dakota since there are no existing hate crime laws that do not enumerate sexual orientation or gender identity. It updates definitions that included those who do live in North Dakota. Even the federal government includes sexual orientation.

Some may argue that motivation is subjective and that it is sometimes impossible to determine if a crime was committed as a result of the offender's bias. The presence of bias does not automatically imply that a crime is a hate crime. Only when a law enforcement inquiry finds enough information to convince a reasonable and prudent person that the offender's acts were motivated, in whole or in part, by their bigotry, could an agency report an incident as a hate crime. Having this bill pass will help our law enforcement learn and acknowledge what to do.

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

Best regards,

Charles Vondal