

Chair Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee: My name is Amy Ingersoll, and I am providing testimony in support of HB1537. I have served in several leadership positions in state-wide organizations, specifically those that support and empower women.

The Department of Justice defines hate crime as that which is perpetrated in part, or in whole, due to a bias against people or groups with specific characteristics. These biases are intensified when considering the intersectionality of women's lived experiences to include woman of color, women representing non-dominant faith communities, women who are New Americans, women who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming, LGBTQIA women, and more. Hate crimes are distinct from other types of crimes, not only in their motivation but in their effect. Victims include the direct target of course, but also others who identify similarly, and importantly, communities as a whole. Hate crimes send messages to members of the victim's group that they are unwelcome and unsafe in the communities where they live and work, which decreases their feelings of safety and security. The North Dakota Women's Network has received biased, and rage filled vitriol to include death threats. More recently, one such threat resulted in disorderly conduct charges for the perpetrator. If we had a statewide law established then, this individual's threats and harassment would have met the standard to be charged with a hate crime. Those of us with lived experiences KNOW these crimes happen.

If there are any hate crime ordinances in municipalities across the state, I can tell you the piecemeal application of such a law is not helpful. I have worked alongside law enforcement professionals for more than ten years throughout my career. I can attest to the diligence they attribute to law and order and the benefit of referring to what is "on the books". In fact, the black and white nature of law is a compelling attribute of those who seek this line of work. If we want to support our law enforcement professionals, establishing a law that defines hate crimes will make determination of a charge easier and compliance with federal regulation more streamlined.

According to DOJ, 23 hate crime incidents were reported against people in North Dakota in the year 2020 (zero hate crimes were reported in the gender category). Yet, it is well researched that the majority of hate crimes are never reported. So

these data underestimate the true pervasiveness of such perpetration. This law creates a valuable opportunity for responding officers to work with alleged victims as they collect more accurate data.

In closing, I request you please vote to support HB1537. We need to highlight our values of a welcoming and safe community for all our citizens, and support law enforcement's mission to protect and serve.

Thank you,

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