

HB 1488 Testimony

I'm writing in opposition of HB 1488 and encourage our legislators to not support this legislation. As a parent of a transgender teen in the State of North Dakota, I find it more often than not that his LGBTQ+ friends do not have supportive home lives, and they often turn to their friends, supportive communities, or clubs and activities at school to find support. LGBTQ+ youth who lack support are more likely to be suicidal. In North Dakota, our LGBTQ youth have higher rates of suicidality, having seriously considered or attempted suicide compared to their straight peers. More than 50% of LGBTQ+ youth have seriously considered suicide and just under 50% have made a plan to do so. About 30% of transgender youth have attempted suicide. Suicidality is reduced significantly when LGBTQ+ youth have a supportive parent or family at home. Unfortunately, that is not often the case.

Based on the data below, a small number of LGBTQ+ youth in North Dakota, 5-7%, feel that they can talk to their parents when feeling sad, hopeless, or anxious. Significantly, 72% of our transgender youth report that their parents swore at them or put them down in the past year, and less than half of our transgender youth felt they had a teacher or adult to talk to if they had a problem. In addition, 27.2% of our transgender youth are not sleeping at home, and 20% have been kicked out, abandoned, or ran away. HB 1488 requires written parental permission for a student to join a club such as a Gay Straight Alliance at school. LGBTQ+ youth who do not have supportive families will lose possibly the only supportive community that could save their lives.

Please do not support this bill with a "Do Not Pass" vote as it can cause great harm to the unsupported LGBTQ+ youth in our state. In addition, the bill doesn't really solve a problem that exists, and it adds a significant bureaucratic step for schools for any club.

North Dakota High School LGBTQ+ Outcomes by Comparison

High School Data Split by - Transgender (T)	Lesbian, Gay, Bi (LGB)	Straight (S)	
Suicidality	T	LGB	S
Qn26 - Seriously considered suicide 12 months before survey	53.2%	50.4%	16.2%
Qn27 - Made a plan about how they would kill themselves in past 12 months	49.2%	42.8%	13.2%
Qn28 - Have ever attempted suicide in past 12 months	30.4%	23.4%	6.1%

Mental Health and Parents	T	LGB	S
Qn114 - Youth who would talk to their parents if feeling sad, empty, hopeless, angry or anxious	5.6%	7.5%	22.2%
Qn87 - Youth who didn't usually sleep in parents or guardians home in the last thirty days	27.2%	7.3%	2.3%
Qn111 - Youth kicked out, ran away, or abandoned	20.0%	5.9%	2.7%
Qn115 - Youth whose parents swore at or put them down one or more times within 12 months of survey	72.2%	71.6%	44.6%
Qn25 - Youth who felt sad or hopeless almost every day for 2 weeks within the last 12th months	65.9%	71.4%	33.4%
Qn119 - Youth who reported mostly bad mental health within last 30 days	53.6%	64.8%	27.5%
Qn117 - Youth reporting one teacher/adult they can talk to if they have a problem	45.6%	56.8%	63.7%

Source: 2021 YRBS data from the ND Department of Public Instruction.