

Chairperson, Senator Jay Elken, members of the Senate Education committee, I am Barry Nelson, here on behalf of the Fargo Human Rights Commission to testify regarding HB 1488, and on behalf of the Commission I urge you to vote do not pass on this bill.

The Fargo Human Rights Commission consists of [eleven volunteer members](#) who are nominated by the Mayor and appointed by the City Commission. Each serves a three-year term. The Human Rights Commissioners represent a broad range of racial, religious, ethnic, social, economic, political and professional groups.

**Our mission is:** The Fargo Human Rights Commission provides leadership and education in areas of civil rights, to eliminate discrimination against persons because of color, creed, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or marital status. It encourages adherence to civil rights through education, conciliation, and mediation. It identifies human and civil rights-related concerns of the public and recommends policies to the board of city commissioners that protect and preserve individual rights.

At its February, 2023 commission meeting, the assembled commission members voted unanimously on a resolution standing in opposition to the numerous bills targeting our Transgender community.

Our opposition to these bills is based on two principles: 1) it is harming our kids, and 2) it is restricting our freedoms.

In support of principle number one, I cite the following: National research tells us that 75% of transgender youth feel unsafe at school and are more likely to miss school out of concern for their safety. The North Dakota Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) data from 2021 indicates that suicide ideation and attempts are disproportionately higher for LGBTQ. Evidence is as follows: middle school students who ever seriously considered suicide: straight – 22%; LGB – 65%; Transgender – 74.7%. Middle school students who have ever attempted suicide: straight – 7.5%; LGB – 29.3%; Transgender – 46.3%.

Passing bills that directly or indirectly target LGB and specifically Transgender students only enhance this environment by further targeting them within schools and community.

It is within the overall context of the numbers and breadth of bills being presented in this legislative body, that we stand in opposition to HB 1488.

But first, if you would allow an old man to reflect on growing up in North Dakota. I am born and raised in North Dakota. I attended a small school where participation in sports, music and extra-curricular activities was not only encouraged, it was deemed essential to the vitality of the school. I had the good fortune of being raised in a family that encouraged that level of participation.

Secondarily, in the last several decades, it has been a constant that students, as they apply for higher ed appointments or employment are considered not solely on their academic achievements, but also on their extra-curricular activities.

It is in that context that I am both blindsided and flummoxed by a bill of this nature. Whatever purpose does a STATE law mandating that a student's participation in an extracurricular activity have to be approved by a parent?

It both challenges a premise: what parent would challenge, much less deny their child's participation in an extra-curricular activity? Is it that parent that is adamantly opposed to their child's participation in the school's chess club?

In the scope of everything important that elected officials are called upon to rule, it begs the question: Why? Why, when we know that a student's participation in extra curriculums, in co-curriculums in clubs positively affects their academic and social participation, Why, would we wish to set up artificial barriers to that participation? Why?

Please vote Do Not Pass on HB 1488. It is the epitome of government overreach in the nth degree.