

Chairperson, Senator Judy Lee, members of the Senate Human Services committee, I am Barry Nelson, here on behalf of the Fargo Human Rights Commission to testify regarding HB 1474, and 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 1474.

As we have reviewed each bill singularly, the first question that arises is: why?

What is the problem the bill addressing? How does this problem affect the community, whether that is the state or a specific community.

Of all the bills introduced this session that has targeted the LGB and particularly the Transgender community, HB 1474 is perhaps the most nonsensical.

We live in a community, in a state, in a country, in a world where data is essential. Good and detailed data collection forms the basis of funds distribution, school census data, mental

health trends and specific needs as well as medical care. To cut off the most fundamental of data collection flies in the face of science, knowledge and wisdom.

One can only assign motivations of denial, of erasure, of discrimination and targeting a small part of our population with the intent to do harm.

This is not what we elect leaders to do.

This is pure nonsense and we urge a do not pass vote.

I may add that in 39 testimonies, 38 are in opposition. But then, this is data, which I ascertain a disturbing number of this body wish to deny exists.