



TESTIMONY on HB 1522
from the
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS—NORTH DAKOTA CHAPTER
to the
ND Senate Human Services Committee
March 15, 2023

Chairperson Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

The Advocacy Committee of the NASW-ND submits this testimony in opposition to House Bill 1522. We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective.

NASW-ND urges the members of the Senate Human Services Committee to vote DO NOT PASS on HB 1522 for the following reasons:

1. HB 1522 will harm and discriminate against transgender students throughout North Dakota.

In North Dakota, suicide attempt rates are 58 times above the national average for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual (LGB) youth. Bullying is common for almost half of North Dakota's LGB youth and stigma remains rampant as eight percent of all youth testify that they were bullied because others thought they may be gay. The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System compiled this data which is used to survey of middle and high school students statewide. From the data, it was high rates of considering suicide (47%) and attempting suicide (29%) prevailed among LGB students. Nowhere in the survey did they ask about transgender students, only LGB.

The Trevor Project has information on transgender youth and states that over half of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously considered suicide in the past year and nearly 1 in 5 have attempted suicide in the past year. 78% percent of transgender and nonbinary youth reported experiencing symptoms of anxiety and 65% symptoms of depression. 37% of transgender youth reported that they have been physically threatened or harmed due to their gender identity.

This bill would harm students by discriminating against them further with restroom restrictions and inconsistent use of preferred pronouns in the school.

2. HB 1522 prohibits public schools, teachers, and leadership from providing accommodations to transgender students.

This bill, causes inconsistencies in preferred-pronoun use, will create confusion among students, teachers, and staff, will promote bullying of transgender students, and will cause further trauma for transgender students.

By prohibiting schools and teachers from respecting transgender and nonbinary students, HB 1522 poses a serious threat to the wellbeing of many students. This bill would deny students who do not conform to a gender binary the opportunity to learn and live in a community that recognizes and respects them. All students deserve to be educated in a safe environment with schools and teachers who respect them for who they are.

The NASW-ND respectfully requests that members of the Senate Human Services Committee vote Do Not Pass on this bill.

Testimony submitted by:
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Seidler, F. (2019). North Dakota is failing our queer youth. Culture. <https://hpr1.com/index.php/feature/culture/north-dakota-is-failing-our-queer-youth-1/>

https://www.hhs.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/DOH%20Legacy/2021ND-High-School_YRBS-Summary-Tables.pdf

The Trevor Project. (2022). National survey on LGBTQ youth mental health. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>