

Senate Human Services Committee  
HB 1522  
Testimony in Opposition

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Committee:

I write on behalf of the Government Affairs Committee for the Fargo Board of Education and respectfully urge you to vote NO on HB 1522.

The Fargo Public School's mission statement is "Educating and Empowering All Students to Succeed." Inherent in this statement is a commitment that no student attending the Fargo Public Schools will be subject to discrimination, bullying, harassment, and that every student will be accepted, and have the same rights and opportunities to learn and participate in school life regardless of gender, gender identity or expression, race, nationality, or disability. HB 1522 stands in the way of this mission and harms students, schools, and school culture.

Allowing students to use facilities aligned with their gender identity has a powerful impact towards ensuring a more accepting, respectful, and inclusive learning and working environment. The simple act of properly addressing a student by their identified pronouns similarly fosters an inclusive, respectful, and accepting environment. National research suggests that an overwhelming 75% of transgender youth have felt unsafe at school and are more likely to miss school out of concern for their own safety. Transgender students suffer from suicide ideation and attempts at far higher rates than their non-LGBTQ peers. All students—particularly our most vulnerable—deserve to learn in an environment free of sex-based harassment, all students should have the freedom to express and have the school honor gender identity, and all students should be able to use facilities in accordance with their gender identity. Research also supports that when schools implement LGBTQ-inclusive policies, such policies benefit ALL students, not just those who identify as LGBTQ. HB 1522 is in direct conflict of our school district's commitment to educational justice.

Additionally, HB 1522 Section 1, Part 2's provision that contemplates use of a specific transgender bathroom upon parental or guardian consultation and approval ignores the reality that these students could face neglect or abuse from their parents and guardians, in addition to creating a discriminatory and segregated policy based upon sex. Equally important, establishing such restrooms in many districts would be cost-prohibitive and unworkable.

We strongly urge you to vote NO on HB 1522.

Sincerely,

/s/ Melissa H. Burkland

Melissa H. Burkland

Fargo Board of Education

Government Affairs Committee Member