

Chairperson Senator Diane Larson, members of the Senate Judiciary committee, I am Barry Nelson, here on behalf of the Fargo Human Rights Commission to testify regarding HB 1333, 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 1333.

This is a very poorly written bill, but it is clear, particularly in the context of the over 20 bills targeting the LGB and Transgender community, that this is another state sponsored attempt to erase, harass and terrorize an important part of our community.

Drag shows are not referenced specifically. “Male or female impersonators who provide entertainment” clearly does call out a form of entertainment, one that has been around for decades, or in one form or another, for hundreds of years. As far as we know, this form of entertainment has created no problems, law enforcement or otherwise. One has to guess that is violating some members of our community’s sense of decorum is the public offerings of all-age drag shows and drag show book reads for children. Parents we have talked to who have brought their children to these shows have not had one complaint.

So, question one is: what is the problem being addressed here that isn’t already being addressed by other laws?

We, members of the Fargo Human Rights Commission, reflect and represent the broad diversity of our larger community. It is a community that we embrace and celebrate. We stand for the dignity and rights of all our residents, regardless of color, creed, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or marital status. We vigorously oppose any government overreach that would restrict and criminalize actions that are representations of people living their authentic selves.

This bill does not reflect the values of our community nor of our state.

Please vote no on HB1333.