North Dakota needs to be a state that is known for personal rights and freedoms. As a clinical psychologist, I recognize this bill to be both insulting and dangerous for a significant minority of our population and all those who love them. The most conservative population estimates would suggest that there are more than 23,000 transgender / gender diverse individuals currently living in North Dakota who would be negatively impacted by this bill. This does not even take into consideration the family and friends who would also be impacted.

Research shows that sex, gender identity, and gender expression are three different categories of a person's experience. Similarly to how we now know that a person's sex does not determine their sexual attraction to others, biological sex does not determine a person's internal sense of gender. We also know that for those who are experiencing gender dysphoria (incongruence between their biological sex and internal sense of self), honoring their name, pronouns, and gender expression leads to better overall health. When people are not afforded the right to live according to their internal identity, suicide rates increase significantly. When it comes to legislation such as this in other states, it has been especially correlated with increases in suicide rates in youth.

This bill would force a number of companies to go against their existing internal policies. This would be a significant disincentive for economic development in our state - encouraging businesses to take their business elsewhere.

I know so many people, personally and professionally, who will be hurt by this bill. In considering personal rights, human dignity, mental and physical health, and economic stability, I implore you to vote NO on SB 2199.