Testimony opposition SB 2199

I'm writing to ask that the legislature vote down proposed Senate Bill No. 2199. The reason for this is because it is both unenforceable and will create unnecessary hardships for implementation as well as deter out-of-state employees and students from coming to ND. It is also cruel, intolerant, and inaccurate, but I'm not sure those aspects of the bill are of interest to many of the voting legislators.

First, it strikes me as nearly impossible to police the use of language around gender, gender identity, or gender expression across the many institutions in the state, whether universities, public service offices, or schools. When there are so many more significant civic initiatives and efforts we could be attending to, it is hard to understand why the legislature would want to mandate this kind of punitive and fine-grained level of micromanagement on those already under-resourced offices. Is the legislature really proposing that DNA tests be conducted regularly around contested or penalized questions of gender? What a ridiculous waste of public resources.

Second, many efforts across universities and other state public service entities nationally are to move toward more inclusion and access, not less. Insisting that the state move in an opposite direction will only be harmful to the quality of life in the state. For example, recent surveys have shown that from 20-25% of young adults identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community. If we are at all interested in supporting and attracting college students and workers to our state, this legislation is counterproductive and will chase away young adults from building their lives in our local communities.

Last, it is factually incorrect to suggest that there is no gender spectrum either biologically, genetically, or socially. Cross-culture understandings of gender vary, and there are a variety of genetic or biological circumstances that challenge the notion of binary gender (see the Intersex Society of North America and work by biology researchers on the range of gender and sex chromosome variability.

In other words, I encourage our legislature to invest time in efforts that will improve the civic, economic, and social quality of life in North Dakota rather than launching both non-feasible and mean-spirited efforts to control people's personal lives.

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