

My name is Barb Stanton, PhD. I am a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor in ND. I am currently employed at Ellie Mental Health located in Moorhead, MN. I do provide services to people in the state of North Dakota.

In my role as a mental health therapist, I have been working with transgender individuals for over 30 years. In that time, the medical and psychological research has shifted the understanding of transgender individuals and appropriate interventions. While we are still working to fully understand the definitive cause, we have learned that it is likely due to the structure of the brain and that is influenced by hormones and biological factors. We do understand that being transgender is not a choice. We know that gender is more about the brain than genitals. We do know that it is a medical condition. We do know that it is critical to follow evidence-based information.

The reason it becomes a mental health issue is due to psychological distress. Individual factors contributing to mental health crises in transgender persons include community attitudes, and societal acceptance.

Too many transgender people are lost to suicide and debilitating depression or anxiety. Forty percent of transgender persons endorse suicidality, and the rate of self-injurious behavior and suicide are markedly higher than in the general population. When there is acceptance and support, mental health improves.

This bill does not follow scientific literature and its passage will cause significant damage the mental health of transgender individuals and devastate families. I urge you to follow fact and reason rather than bias and misconceptions and vote DO NOT PASS on SB2099.