Dear Chair Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to Senate Bill 2199. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

As a suicide prevention advocate that specializes in LGBTQ+ populations, this bill gives me great concern for the impact it'll have on our state, our institutions, and our community. By redefining how language works within Title One of our century code, this bill impacts virtually every aspect of our law with numerous possible unintended repercussions.

The full impact of this, I'm not sure anyone can say at the moment. I believe that itself is worth an abundance of caution and consideration. However, the many individuals I've spoken to on policy and law have indicated to me that this could force misgendering transgender individuals at virtually all levels of state funded organizations regardless of a transgender person's legal sex. It could conflict with legal protections on the federal level and represents a logistical nightmare to organizations working across state lines.

Standard practice and ethics across healthcare, social work, and education is affirming transgender people within the gender they identify with to reduce suicidality, depression, and anxiety. We find that when kids or adults can be true to themselves, they thrive.

That said, I don't believe pronouns are magic words, but pronouns are indicators of safety to transgender and non-binary populations. And when a trans adult goes to a doctor, when a trans youth talks to a social worker after running away, or a non-binary student is trying to pay attention in class — if they are outed or misgendered they aren't going to feel safe.

When I think about bills like this and the consequence they will have, I think about accessibility, safety, and suicide prevention. I am not sure the benefit this bill is supposed to provide, but I can think of many ways this can hurt communities. I can think about how this makes North Dakota a less competitive state to work or live in. I can think of the many challenges this would pose to our sectors of health, human service, and education. Please give this a Do Not Pass.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state.

Best regards,

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