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. This bill should receive a Do Not Pass as it attempts to solve a problem that does not in reality exist. In fact, it will cause a number of problems for individuals, for faith communities, for school children and their families, and for employers in North Dakota.

I am the parent of a nonbinary person. They are an excellent parent to their 10-year-old. We live together and I have seen firsthand the impact of being their authentic self has on maintaining their mental health. As a young adult who has previously attempted self-harm, being legislated as a person who is not considered to exist could likely push them over the edge.

Additionally, as an ordained minister of the Gospel, our faith community has a particular call to minister to people where they are. We respect the gender that individuals identify with. We celebrate their families and the important moments in their lives. We sit with them in their pain when others seek to deny their very existence. It is the call upon our faith community to love and accept our transgender and nonbinary siblings, using their chosen names and their pronouns. I cannot imagine the harm done to an individual who is forced to state a gender different from T

This feels very much like we are being told that we cannot hold our firmly held beliefs that God has created each of us and that God has imparted an identity to each person. That identity does not always align with the gender a person was assigned at birth.

I fear that this legislation will prevent me to practice the very tenets of my faith as expressed in the United Church of Christ. As a pastor I have an obligation to minister to the person in front of me and respect them as they are. I must be able to baptize a person with their chosen name, referring to them according to their gender identity. No DNA test can make that determination. Only that individual can express who they are.

Transgender persons have been accepted for centuries among indigenous peoples and are considered people of great honor, often referred to as “Two-Spirit” persons. This indicates that they carry the best traits of the masculine and feminine persona.

Among the many people I personally know that are transgender and nonbinary, many have either left or are considering leaving the state of North Dakota. Spiritually we are worse off without them. Economically, businesses are worse off without them.

Please recommend Do Not Pass to this unnecessary legislaton.

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

Best regards,

Rev. Grace M. Morton, People’s United Church of Christ, Fargo