My name is Cindy Azucena Gomez-Schempp. I'm a Mexican-American radio station owner/broadcaster in Moorhead, MN on the border of North Dakota. Our station's reach and work extends into Fargo, ND and throughout the bi-state metropolitan area. My children attended Fargo Public Schools and my family conducts its business, shopping, banking, entertainment, engagement with public officials and institutions of government in North Dakota every single day. My child is an adult transgender man living with a disability who needs a highly supportive living environment to thrive. The process for getting a proper diagnosis for my child in a country newly discovering and understanding developmental disabilities such as autism, and ADHD, has been difficult. It took me 12 years even though I knew from birth that my child was different.

I am a paralegal with over 20 years of experience but my main area of focus has been Administrative Law, which was the main area of practice when I moved to North Dakota and worked at the Schneider Law Firm in Fargo. There I focused primarily on worker's compensation and Social Security Disability cases. I noticed a pattern of overlap between disability cases of neurodivergent people with disabling conditions ranging from autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Bipolar, Turrets and epilepsy which **also** presented as queer, non-conforming or whom identified as transgender. The significance in correlation between those determined by the Social Security Administration as being totally disabled and in need of significant support from the SSA as well as protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and LGBTQIA individuals was almost absolute in my professional experience. I knew then, that my own child, who had been diagnosed with autism, would likely identify as queer, non-binary, or transgender at some later stage in their development. They did. And now here we are.

Amid the flurry of anti-trans bills being proposed around the country and in the State of North Dakota, which has a legislative history of upholding unconstitutional state laws, I find myself submitting this testimony in the defense of my child's right to exist, express themselves, and be free from the persecution, hate, and stochastic terrorism that laws like this will enact against him. I believe that it would behoove the legislature to do more scientific research and look into the correlation and overlap between the most vulnerable populations among us of the developmentally disabled and physically disabled who also share a trans identity. Because the numbers are very high. Attached, please find a number of sources which illustrate the correlation between permanently disabled individuals protected under the ADA, and trans identity.

Dattaro, L. (2022, August 16). *Largest study to date confirms overlap between autism and gender diversity*. Spectrum. Retrieved January 17, 2023, from https://www.spectrumnews.org/news/largest-study-to-date-confirms-overlap-between-autism-and-gender-diversity/

Cooper, K., Mandy, W., Butler, C., & Russell, A. (2022, May). *The lived experience of gender dysphoria in autistic adults: An interpretative phenomenological analysis*. Autism : the international journal of research and practice. Retrieved January 17, 2023, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9014767/

University of Cambridge. (2020, August 7). *Transgender and gender-diverse individuals are more likely to be autistic and report higher autistic traits*. University of Cambridge. Retrieved January 17, 2023, from https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/transgender-and-gender-diverse-individuals-are-more-likely-to-be-autistic-and-report-higher-autistic

Warrier, V., Greenberg, D. M., Weir, E., Buckingham, C., Smith, P., Lai, M.-C., Allison, C., & Baron-Cohen, S. (2020, August 7). *Elevated rates of autism, other neurodevelopmental and psychiatric diagnoses, and autistic traits in transgender and gender-diverse individuals*. Nature News. Retrieved January 17, 2023, from https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-17794-1

Novara Media. (2022, April 21). *Autistic people are more likely to be trans. so what?* Novara Media. Retrieved January 17, 2023, from https://novaramedia.com/2022/04/21/autistic-people-are-more-likely-to-be-trans-so-what/

White, B. (2016, November 20). *The link between autism and Trans Identity*. The Atlantic. Retrieved January 17, 2023, from https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2016/11/the-link-between-autism-and-trans-identity/507509/

This next source is of particular interest because it highlights the disturbing practice of Applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy (which has been used as the primary therapy for Autism Spectrum Disorder cases) as a form of torture and abuse that is now looked down by medical professionals addressing/providing medical care to people with autism. This ABA method and its founder have also been instrumental in the formation of gender-shaping behaviorism that led to conversion therapy for queer people; a practice which today is opposed by the American Psychiatric Association which now “reaffirms its recommendation that ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals sexual orientation and recommends that ethical practitioners respect the identities for those with diverse gender expressions encouraging psychotherapies which affirm individuals sexual orientations and gender identities and encourages legislation which would prohibit the practice of reparative or conversion therapies that are based on the priori assumption that diverse sexual orientations and gender identities are mentally ill.

Catalyst Journal - Renison University College, University of Waterloo . (n.d.). *View of disturbing behaviours: Ole Ivar Lovaas and the Queer History of Autism Science: Catalyst: Feminism, theory, technoscience*. Catalyst. Retrieved January 17, 2023, from https://catalystjournal.org/index.php/catalyst/article/view/29579/23427

As a mother and guardian to an disabled adult with autism (among other disabilities) with the intersectional identities of Mexican-American (indigenous, first American peoples) queer and transgender, I will continue to fight and advocate for my son’s right to exist and fight to uphold

his rights under the law. Currently, this bill is threatening to discriminate against my child's rights to accommodation and to be free from discrimination by federally funded state institutions and businesses under the ADA. Furthermore, my son's rights of expression and free speech are also being infringed upon. Finally, the frivolous and unscientific basis of this bill (DNA testing requirements) are a violation of privacy. Nobody has the right to demand a DNA test or encroach upon the privacy of disabled Americans just because. Parents like myself throughout the state will have no other recourse than to sue the state for violating the ADA if this bill were to become a law in North Dakota. I vehemently oppose it.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today

Cindy Gomez-Schempp
Station Manager 88.1 FM, KPPP-LP radio