NDSU | STUDENT GOVERNMENT

SB 2199

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Chair Larson and Members of the Committee: My name is Seth Lumley, and I am the Executive Commissioner of Legislative Affairs for North Dakota State University's Student Government. I would like to provide testimony in opposition to SB 2199 and to present the perspective of NDSU students on SB 2199.

NDSU Student Government is an organization of students at NDSU elected and appointed to represent the interests of the NDSU student body both externally at places like the capitol and internally through our student senate. We are comprised of members from all academic colleges at North Dakota State University, ensuring students from all majors and backgrounds have a voice. Our mission is to leave the university better than we arrived through ensuring that student voices are heard both on campus and at the legislature.

On November 20th, 2022, the NDSU student senate unanimously approved a set of three legislative priorities for the 2023 legislative session. One of these priorities was the preservation and education in freedom of speech on campus. It is on behalf of this priority that I offer testimony today. We as an organization have concerns regarding the free speech implications that SB 2199 would have for the future of higher education in North Dakota.

Being able to refer to an individual with whatever name or words in reference to said individual's sex, gender, gender identity, or gender expression one feels are appropriate without fear of government reprisal is part of what makes speech truly free. In the same way that I would not want the government to penalize me for calling a male individual who identifies as a woman a man, so too would I be opposed to the government penalizing others for calling that same individual a woman. As a student myself, being confronted with different points of view on controversial topics such as this has led me to have a greater understanding of said topics. On more than one occasion, my opinion has changed when presented with additional information. But even in cases in which my opinion remained unchanged, conversations with those who held beliefs in conflict to my own have allowed me to better understand my own thoughts on the issues that matter most.

In short, I urge you to support freedom of speech and ensure college campuses like NDSU can remain the crossroads of ideas by opposing SB 2199. Thank you Chair Larson and Members of the Committee.