January 17, 2023

RE: SB 2199

Dear Chair Larson and Senate Judiciary Committee members,

My name is Kara Gloe. I am a mental health therapist licensed in both North Dakota and Minnesota. I work at Canopy Medical Clinic in Fargo, ND. Among the primary populations of people I serve are folks living with HIV/AIDS and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, aromantic, and Two Spirit (LGBTQIA2S+) folks in North Dakota. I am writing today to request a Do Not Pass on SB 2199. It is not hyperbolic to say this bill puts children's lives in danger, would create a host of logistical nightmares, and will drive professionals and businesses out of the state.

First, the data on the lethality of being a young trans person in the State of North Dakota is concrete. For trans high schoolers in North Dakota we know:

- More than half seriously considered suicide in the last year
- That rate is 3.3 times higher than their straight cisgender counter parts
- 30.4% attempted suicide in the past 12 months
- That is five times higher than their straight cisgender counter parts.

This data, which focuses solely on youth in North Dakota, is easily accessible as part of the 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. These are the stats before the 2023 North Dakota legislature introduced 16 bills, to date, which will either directly target or will severely disrupt the lives of our transgender friends, family, and neighbors. We also know being transgender is not a mental health disorder. The American Association of Psychologists removed it as such in 2012. It is now recognized by every major healthcare organization – mental and physical, as a health disorder, specifically a sex disorder. Meaning, the 50% of trans youth in North Dakota who have seriously considered suicide in the last year have not done so *because* they are trans. Rather, the increase in suicidality is due to minority stress, discrimination, and ostracization. This bill and every other like it is already doing damage and would be devastating if passed.

Second, the language of this bill is so broad and vague, it leaves me with several serious logistical questions. How does the State of North Dakota intend handle the inconsistency this bill will cause between federal and state requirements? For example, I work at a medical clinic which provides services to people living with HIV/AIDS in North Dakota through the Ryan White Program. This is money that comes from the federal government, moves through the state health department, and is distributed to organizations providing care. Federal reporting forms for this program require pronouns and chosen names. This is *one* example of *one* program in *one* area of government. There must be hundreds more. Will the State of North Dakota stop receiving federal funding if inconsistencies exist? Can we afford to have less resources at a time when there is teacher shortage and healthcare – mental and physical, is already difficult to access in many rural areas of the state? Will I be required to misgender and deadname all my clients, or only the ones with North Dakota Medicaid? What is the funding mechanism for this bill? Where does the State of North Dakota plan to come up with the money to perform DNA tests on all its citizens and every baby born here? Can we really say this is best use of tax payer dollars?

Lastly, how does the State of North Dakota plan to deal with the potential mass exodus of businesses and professionals this bill will likely initiate? For instance, this bill is in direct conflict with the National Association of Social Workers' (NASW) code of ethics. As such, if it went into effect, I would be forced to leave the state to practice ethically. Even if it were not a violation under the NASW, it would be harmful for me to provide clinical therapy under these limiting conditions. I have heard about teachers who have already left the state and I am sure doctors and nurses are right behind. We do not have to search hard to see how laws like this have panned out in other states. Florida's teacher shortage is so dire, they are putting people with no teaching education or experience in classrooms. The collapse of a state's education system is a fast train to the bottom. Is that where we want to be? While I am not saying every social worker, therapist, teacher, professor, doctor, and nurse, etc. will leave should this bill pass, can we afford to lose any?

Lastly, I have difficulty seeing how this bill, and so many others proposed by this legislative session, will withstand the constitutional challenges that are sure to follow. Prohibiting people's ability to interact with others in the way they see fit is certainly an afront to a person's First Amendment right to free speech. Is defending these clearly unconstitutional laws where our time, energy, and resources are most needed?

If this bill passes and is allowed to go into effect, it will only increase suffering in this state. We will lose children needlessly, mental health issues will increase in frequency and severity, healthcare costs will skyrocket, the educational system will suffer, and it will become incredibly difficult to retain professionals and business, let alone recruit them. This bill and the 15 others like it are a recipe for disaster for North Dakota.

Please vote Do Not Pass on SB 2199.

Sincerely,
Kara Gloe, LMSW
Canopy Medical Clinic