Hello, my name is Reed Eliot Rahrich. I grew up in North Dakota and lived there until I was 25. I have friends and family there, people and places that still, despite the best efforts of the sponsors of this bill, make me homesick. I truly wish I could join you all at the Capitol this morning, but I was unable to get the time away from work.

I left North Dakota in 2016 after a series of escalating brushes with anti-LGBTQ violence. I was followed into a restroom by a drunk man questioning which facilities I was using, screaming at me until I hid in the stall, standing on the toilet so he wouldn't find me. My tires were slashed a few weeks after I came out, and I never found out who did it or why. I was refused service multiple times at bars because I looked like a man but my driver's license wasn't updated to reflect my new name and gender marker. I became suicidal until I sought hormone replacement therapy and finally left the state for somewhere I could start over.

I am a guy with a beard, chest hair, and a beer belly. I've had a mastectomy and a hysterectomy. My voice is deep. Strangers pretty much all assume I'm a man, if a little short. If this bill passed, every state funded employee in North Dakota would have to refer to me using the pronouns "she" and "her." If I, heaven forbid, needed medical care in North Dakota, my doctors would have to refer to me as a woman. I've wondered for ages what people who sponsor these types of bills think they are accomplishing, which closet they assume we will all slink back into. The cat is out of the bag. I guarantee folks will be more confused if the government starts enforcing mandatory hate speech. Most people in North Dakota understood me, or at least left well enough alone. It was only the truly committed bigots that forced me out.

I left North Dakota because it became apparent to me that the politicians and the narrow-minded in my home state didn't want me. Unfortunately, this represented enough of a threat to my liberty and happiness that I had to move somewhere where my rights would be respected. Now Minnesota gets my tax money, my labor, and my future.

When I moved here, I joined a chain migration. I've brought my parents, my brother, sister in law, and their three kids, several friends, and their family members here. There is a thriving community of former North Dakotans living in Minnesota, able to love and celebrate their queer family members in ways they never could back home. When I tell people here what I experienced back in North Dakota, they look at me with pity. I hate my home state being seen like that. I could wax poetic about the rolling prairie, or how much I miss the enormity of the sky. I could tell you how I still haven't found a donut shop here as good as Sandy's, or how impossible it is to find fleischkuechle in Minneapolis. I could get as folksy as you please, but what I can't do is compel you to see me as a human being.

This bill is a poorly thought out affront to human rights, both of transgender people and also the rights of every state funded employee. The thought that conservatives in North Dakota would willingly champion a bill this authoritarian proves to me that you all have utterly forgotten your own values in pursuit of a vapid culture war. Not only will this bill stain your reputation, but this kind of censorship tends to open the door for much more government repression down the road.

I strongly recommend a **Do Not Pass** vote. I won't pander to you and I won't pretend to like you. We both know that folks like the sponsors of this bill are more than happy to remove every person like me from the state of North Dakota. They'll do whatever it takes to force the assimilation or relocation of every transgender person in this state, with this bill and all the other bills targeting trans people this session. The suicide rate in this state is going to rise if you pass this and the other anti trans bills. Ask yourself if that is the kind of legacy you're comfortable leaving.

Thank you for your time,
Reed Eliot Rahrich