January 17, 2023

Dear Chair Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I have known people who have lived here their entire lives, they have faced immense hate but also immense love because of who they are. They have overcome extreme adversity because of their identity and found a community that supports them despite vocal hatred from politicians and neighbors. SB2199 makes a very public statement of hate and would normalize this hatred even more. My purpose in writing this testimony is to voice  and correct personal pronouns can lead to a 29% decrease in suicidal ideation and as high as a 56% decrease in suicidal ***behavior*** — that is, actual attempts at suicide (see Russell, Pollitt, and Grossman 2018; Stanley Vance, 2018). Because one's pronouns are in effect extensions of their name, using the correct pronouns to refer to trans and gender nonconforming people has similar benefits: To use someone's correct personal pronouns is to validate and reaffirm their identity; to misgender them (that is, to refer to them with pronouns other than their chosen pronouns) is to communicate, excruciatingly clearly, that their identity and lived experiences do not matter and that they, as individuals, do not deserve to be treated as the real, whole human beings that they are. If this bill passes, it will codify into law not only overt discrimination towards transgender individuals, but also the covert communication that the trans community in North Dakota, our stories and our lives, do not matter, that we do not deserve the same basic courtesy and autonomy you extend to cisgender people every day. Therefore, I urge you to give this bill a do not pass for the sake of trans lives, because to codify this bill into law is to not only condone but promote the active extermination of the transgender community in our state.