

Senate Judiciary Committee Members:

I am a life-long resident of North Dakota, a mother, grandmother and community member writing to express my opposition to SB 2231 which relates to preferred pronoun discriminatory practice and school policies on expressed gender. As I submit my 10<sup>th</sup> bill testimony this session, I continue to be dismayed at the number of bills that are attacking a small group of young people in our state. This bill, like all of the others, is not needed, is against the law, is hurtful and discriminatory to people who choose to identify by a different pronoun and is a waste of legislators' time and taxpayers' money.

I am not a legal expert, but the research that I have done tells me that this amendment to the Century Code related to preferred pronouns is actually discriminatory. The Supreme Court decided in 2020 that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects gay and transgender employees against discrimination. It appears to me that this bill would go against this protection.

Personal pronouns indicate gender and all employees like to be identified by their correct pronoun, whether they are transgender or cisgender. Being misgendered by your employer or co-workers can be considered harassment if it is an ongoing issue. I do not understand people having an issue letting people know what their pronoun is or using the correct pronoun when addressing others. I grew up in a family where we were taught to show respect for others and using the correct pronoun is one simple way to do that. By using the correct pronoun and/or sharing your pronoun, you are showing respect for that person and creating an inclusive work environment.

When we look at the school policy section of this bill, I would first like to state that the biology of sex/gender is a complex system that includes chromosomes, genes and genetic expression, neurobiology and endocrinology. To simplify it in the way that it is presented in the bill is an insult to the evidence-based researchers that have studied this topic. Another problem I have with this section is that research has shown that allowing a person to use their pronoun of choice helps to reduce depression and suicidal thoughts. A recent study on pronoun use found that transgender youth who had their pronouns respected by all or most people in their lives attempted suicide at half the rate of those whose pronouns were not respected. It also found that when students could safely use their pronouns at school, home, work and with friends, they had 71% fewer symptoms of depression, a 34% decrease in suicidal thoughts and a 65% decrease in suicidal attempts. We should be doing all we can to protect the mental health of these young people, but this bill would have the opposite effect. In addition to the harm that could come from this bill, it is obviously in conflict with Title IX, which protects transgender students from discrimination.

Please protect our state from lawsuits regarding this bill and protect our transgender residents from discrimination by giving this bill a Do Not Pass vote.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jane Hirst  
Minot, ND