

Dear Chair Larsen and members of the Senate Industry and Business Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to Senate Bill 2260. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

I have two objections to this bill. The first is the requirement that teachers provide curriculum for their classes 7 days, or even 3 days, in advance. Teaching happens at different speeds. Sometimes a class will move quickly through a portion of the curriculum, or get stuck in one area and need to be taught that subject in a different way. Requiring all curriculum at the detail level SB2260 states to be filed publicly 3 – 7 days in advance hogs teachers and will result in less education in the state of North Dakota. This is especially true as it relates to gender roles. If a student asks about different roles for men and women during the 1800's, for example, if it wasn't in the original outline for the lesson, does the teacher have to say, "Let me get back to you in 4 days?" A student's natural curiosity is often the best teaching tool.

My second objection is section 2, 2.f, banning the use of nicknames and preferred pronouns. This section goes against everything we know about psychological support of teenagers. It will make life harder, not just for transgender teens, but all teens who are struggling to figure out who they are in the world. Teens try out identities to figure out what is a true expression of who they are and what is just who others think they should be. When this kind of self-expression is not allowed, teens can fall into clinical levels of things like depression and anxiety. For transgender teens, studies show that one adult using the pronouns and name they prefer can reduce their suicide rate. The trans youth data survey showed that 74% of transgender youth in North Dakota contemplated suicide and 46% attempted. If this bill prevents that one adult from helping these kids, the numbers could rise. If the point of this bill is to assist these teens in killing themselves, it has the potential to be effective. My church hosts our community's Transgender Day of Remembrance service each year. Saying the names of North Dakota youth who die from suicide because they don't see a pathway to functional adulthood amidst a state they fear is trying to kill them is one of the most heartbreaking things I do.

Please do not pass this bill.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state

Best regards,

Rev. Michelle Webber