

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 am a suicide prevention advocate and our state's expert in LGBTQ+ outcome data for North Dakota, especially as it relates to youth and schools. I am the author of the LGBTQ+ School Climate Report, a year-long look into school policies across North Dakota, student outcomes, and process improvement.

North Dakota LGBTQ+ Data

[\(2021\)](#) North Dakota LGBTQ+ School Climate Report

[\(2021 Summary\)](#): High School LGBTQ+

- [\(2021\)](#) High School LGB
- [\(2021\)](#) High School Trans

[\(2021 Summary\)](#) Middle School LGBTQ+

- [\(2021\)](#) Middle School LGB
- [\(2021\)](#) Middle School Trans

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data is the data our schools use for understanding their student population and needs. It is the data our health centers use for targeting approaches for community health. It is the data we advocate funding for state and federal grants. When looking at the base comparison of LGBTQ+ youth compared to straight cisgender youth, the discrepancies in outcomes are clear.

Currently Trans Experience High School

- 94.4% Do not talk to parents when feeling sad, empty, hopeless, or angry (HS)
- 72.7% Didn't feel safe at school most of time or always (HS)
- 61.0% Bullied on School Property (MS)
- 27.0% Didn't Sleep in Parents Home + 20.0% Have Run away or homeless (HS)

It is worth noting that schools are often places for support for LGBTQ+ youth. While youth aren't talking to their parents when feeling sad, empty, hopeless, or angry, they are nine times more likely to talk to adults within a school for support when they're experiencing a problem.

These students turn to adults at school, because they don't feel safe at home. When these youth have one adult who can accept them, [their suicidality reduces by 39%](#). Suicidality in this population is shown to be significantly higher when they have [unsupportive parents](#). When they don't feel safe at home they're likely to use illicit substances and run away. When schools don't offer some kind of safety net for them, they flee the state and open themselves up to homelessness and trafficking.

Our state is also looking to allow conversion therapy this legislative session. If schools outed children to their parents, they're outing them to a litany of harm that I would hope our government has a compelling interest to stop.

I have heard the stories of parents discovering their kids are identifying as trans at school. And I hear these parents feeling confused and betrayed by this. However, when I see a kid not telling their parents this, I wonder if that is because they're afraid. I wonder why the parents never asked their kid, given they have every single night to do so? How much do we care about child safety over parental rights?

Aside from these concerns, I will draw attention to this part:

c. Procedures to notify a parent at least three days in advance and obtain the parent's written consent before the parent's child attends any instruction or presentation that relates to gender roles or stereotypes, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or romantic or sexual relationships;

To help the drafters of this legislation, they should add "Except for material covering cisgender and straight topics". Otherwise any presentation talking about men or a book featuring a married couple would need permission. Unless the sponsors wanted it to be strict.

Beyond how it even relates to LGBTQ+ students, I really worry about the abuse kids could suffer because of this legislation. I'm looking at the item that allows parents to remove kids from clubs or activities. And I can see that being held over the kid as a punishment if they don't clean the dishes one night or if the parent just feels like it.

Often after school activities are hugely beneficial for mental health, social belonging, and community for all youth. While I understand some activities creating burdens for parents or not being possible for any reason, a mechanism to harm your kid already enrolled in a program just because you may have been upset with them is scary to me.

Please consider that when you empower all parents to have expanded authority, you're also expanding the power given to abusive parents to be that much more disruptive and harmful in their kids' lives. While I wish the number of abusive parents was zero, we know it isn't. I only ask that you weigh the harm this legislation can create, when balancing the powers you want parents to wield.

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

Best regards,

Faye Seidler