

Chairman Ruby and members of the House Human Services Committee:
I am writing in support of HB 1144.

My name is Grace Kurtz and I am a resident of Devils Lake. I would like to advocate for the preservation of traditional, gender-specific bathroom facilities in the schools in ND.

This issue is directly relevant to the **current plan** at Prairie View Elementary School (Devils Lake School District), where the school board has approved the construction of unisex bathrooms as a part of the PV school addition project in Spring 2025.

When I learned of the plan a few months ago, I wrote a petition to raise awareness in our community and to encourage the school board members and Mr. Clouten, the superintendent, to reevaluate the decision to build unisex bathrooms. The petition has 894 signatures, the majority of which are from members of the Devils Lake community. These signatures represent hundreds of people who share my concerns and prefer the traditional male / female bathroom format, as evident from the comments shared on the petition.

Petition website:

<https://www.change.org/p/urge-school-board-to-reevaluate-plan-for-unisex-bathrooms-in-particular-at-prairie-view>

As a parent and as a woman, I have a deeply personal perspective on this issue. My child was diagnosed with Crohn's disease when he was in elementary school (9 years old). It's irritable bowel disease that brings both emotional and physical challenges, much pain and stress, especially in a school setting. Using the restroom has been a source of stress and anxiety for him, and I know that he is not alone in this. Many children face similar challenges in bathrooms and public spaces, whether due to medical conditions, developmental stages, past trauma or simply the natural need for privacy. For young girls experiencing their first menstrual cycle or children dealing with bathroom-related anxiety, the need for private, gender-specific facilities is critical.

Unisex bathrooms strip away the inherent privacy & dignity that traditional facilities provide. They create unnecessary stress & potential embarrassment for children during what is already a vulnerable and formative time in their lives. Schools should be spaces that prioritize the well-being & comfort of students, and maintaining separate male and female bathrooms is a fundamental part of that responsibility.

Beyond the personal impact, my husband and I have heard from dozens of community members who share these concerns. Many parents, educators, & residents support traditional bathrooms but hesitate to speak out publicly due to fear of judgment or backlash. This is particularly true for those employed within the school system, where expressing dissent could carry professional or social risks. Their silence does not diminish the validity of their concerns or the widespread community support for this issue.

I urge this committee to quickly pass House Bill 1144 to ensure that schools continue to provide safe, private, and respectful restroom facilities for all students. Our children deserve nothing less.
Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Grace Kurtz