

Statement of Opposition to House Bill 1144

1/26/2025

Dear House Human Services Committee,

I am writing to strongly oppose House Bill 1144, which seeks to amend section 15.1-06-21 of the North Dakota Century Code concerning transgender student accommodations and restroom use in public schools. While this bill claims to address privacy and parental rights, it instead legislates discrimination, undermines students' dignity, and threatens the mental and emotional well-being of transgender youth in North Dakota. This is not the path toward building schools where every child feels seen, valued, and safe.

This bill is discrimination and it's dangerous. Forcing students to use restrooms that correspond to their biological sex disregards their lived realities and identities, turning a fundamental need—using the restroom—into a source of humiliation and fear. This isn't about privacy; it's about creating barriers for transgender students, who already face staggering rates of bullying and harassment. By refusing to honor a student's chosen pronouns, this bill denies their very humanity. Something as simple as addressing a child by their name and pronouns can be a lifeline for a transgender student, affirming their identity in a world that often dismisses or attacks it.

This bill is a violation of privacy. Requiring schools to disclose a student's transgender status to their parents, regardless of the child's wishes, is deeply invasive. Not every home is a safe space. This policy could endanger students, forcing them into potentially hostile environments, stripping them of their right to privacy, and placing their mental health and safety at risk.

This bill puts our schools at a disadvantage. This bill places North Dakota schools at odds with federal anti-discrimination laws, such as Title IX, which protect transgender students' rights. It risks not only costly legal battles but also the loss of critical federal funding, jeopardizing education for all students in the state.

This bill harms children. Denying transgender students recognition and support is not neutral—it's harmful. Transgender youth are already at an elevated risk of depression, anxiety, and suicide. Policies like this compound their struggles, sending a clear message that they are not welcome or respected in their schools. How can we expect these students to thrive when their basic rights and identities are treated as debatable?

House Bill 1144 does not protect privacy or promote fairness—it legislates exclusion, stigmatization, and harm. Every child in North Dakota deserves to go to school without fear of being dismissed or denied recognition of their identity. This bill moves us backward, creating a hostile environment for transgender youth and undermining the values of respect, compassion, and equality that should guide us as a society.

I urge you to reject this harmful legislation. Let us send a message that North Dakota's schools are places where all students—regardless of their gender identity—are supported, affirmed, and empowered to succeed.

Sincerely,

Kara L. Geiger
Mandan