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Vote NO on HB 1144

You have already shared a bathroom with a transgender person. The Census estimates that 1.14% of Americans identify as transgender. When you consider just how many people you have encountered in public restrooms, and the statistical likelihood that one in a hundred was trans, it is more likely than not. But even if you believe you have not, suppose for a moment that you did.

You are in a busy place, a mall or event center. You enter the restroom and lock yourself in a private stall. Someone next to you does the same. Both of you do your business without interacting, and when you are done, you both make your way to the sink. The person beside you looks like the other men or women in the restroom. You wash your hands and leave. You would never know that they may have been assigned a different sex at birth.

It is not easy to pretend to be transgender. Trans people meticulously style their clothing and hair, take such extraordinary pride and concern with their appearance, and may wear restrictive garments like binders or tuckers. They go through social and familial ostracization, overhaul and build their own identity. Many take years of hormones or have surgery to feel more comfortable in their bodies. That cannot be faked in a matter of days. Transitioning is for many a lifelong process. Forcing individuals who appear to be a certain gender to use the restroom of the opposite sex can cause far more serious danger to them due to hostile cultural ideas and misinformation about transgender people.

For those concerned that predators may enter the wrong restroom, consider the fact that those with ill intentions do not care about following the rules. They will enter those restrooms anyway and will look out of place just as much as they would if they had pretended to transition.

I have some confusion and concern about how this bill is going to be enforced. Adult teachers and administrators should never be inspecting the bodies or genitals of students. Allowing them to do so will enable predators to force students to comply with inappropriate demands and gives them an excuse to use when they are caught.

North Dakota has always prioritized small government and the freedom of its people to express themselves and engage in innovation. Our democracy values the votes and voices of our citizens. We should never silence or limit those voices because we disagree with what they have to say. The precedent in US Courts has always been that minors have the same first amendment rights as adults and do so in a separate capacity from their parents. These children are not a threat, and I am disappointed to see my representatives and tax dollars be wasted on limiting their personal expression.

“All individuals are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty; ... pursuing and obtaining safety and happiness; ... which shall not be infringed.”

- North Dakota Constitution, Article I, Section I

The most damning and significant piece of evidence against HB 1144 is that according to NPR, transgender and gender non-conforming minors are 72% more likely to attempt suicide in states where anti-trans bills like this one are passed. Another study conducted across 3 universities concluded that 86% of trans youth had considered suicide and 56% attempted it. There are many who succeeded, but they could not be included in surveys. They are dead. Those children are not alive anymore. They will never walk across the stage at their high school graduation. They will never rent their first apartment, will never marry the love of their life, or have children of their own. And they did it for one simple reason: Their states, communities and families have told them that their experiences are wrong, their identity is invalid, and that they must live a life inauthentic to their truest, happiest self. Do not let North Dakota tell its children that they are less than.

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