



**Testimony on HB 1144**  
**North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers**  
**27 January, 2025**  
**House Human Services Committee**

Chairman Ruby and Members of the Human Services Committee:

The North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-ND) strongly opposes HB 1144, because it infringes upon the rights and well-being of transgender and gender nonconforming youth. This bill stands in direct opposition to the values of equality, justice, and dignity that are core to our profession, and threaten the mental and physical health of those it seeks to marginalize.

The provisions in HB 1144 will exacerbate the systemic mistreatment and stigma that transgender and gender nonconforming youth already face. Not only does this bill restrict transgender and gender nonconforming students' access to restrooms and other school facilities that align with their gender identity, it also prevents schools from creating policies or guidelines around teachers and staff using student's preferred pronouns. Transgender and nonbinary youth experience disproportionately high rates of discrimination, bullying, and harassment in schools. According to The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, nearly 80% of transgender and nonbinary youth report experiencing discrimination in some form, and such harmful experiences exacerbate mental health struggles, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation (The Trevor Project, 2022). By institutionalizing discrimination and exclusion through policies like HB 1144, this bill will further harm these already vulnerable youth.

It is also important to recognize that inclusive, supportive school environments are essential to all students' academic success and mental well-being. Transgender and gender nonconforming students are more likely to feel safe and supported in schools where staff use their preferred pronouns and provide access to restrooms and facilities that align with their gender identity. Denying them the simple respect of using their preferred pronouns and access to these facilities sends a harmful message that their identities are not valid, which can lead to significant emotional distress and further alienation. We should be prioritizing the well-being and dignity of *all* students, including transgender and gender nonconforming youth, rather than enacting policies that contribute to their marginalization.

NASW-ND opposes any legislative efforts that violate the civil liberties of transgender and gender nonconforming people. We urge the members of this committee to **vote DO NOT PASS on HB 1144**, as its harmful provisions will only deepen the marginalization and suffering of transgender and gender nonconforming youth in schools. Instead, we call for policies that protect the rights of all individuals, ensure access to safe and inclusive learning environments, and promote a society where every person can live free from discrimination and stigma.

Respectfully,

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North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers