

Chairman and Members of the Political Subdivisions Committee,

My name is Lexi Duppong, I am a born and raised North Dakotan and it is my first time speaking to people that hold such high importance to the future of our great state. It is an honor for me to stand before you today to testify on behalf of House Bill 1134.

Imagine waking up one morning to find your most private details — your phone number, home address, even information about your family — published online for anyone to see. Imagine receiving a flood of calls from strangers, some threatening, some predatory, all invading your sense of safety. This is not just a hypothetical scenario; it is the grim reality of a practice known as doxxing.

Doxxing is the deliberate act of publishing someone's private information online without their consent. It is a form of harassment that can upend lives, leaving victims fearful, exposed, and unsafe. This crime thrives on the ease of access to personal information in our digital age, weaponizing it against innocent people. And yet, here in North Dakota, we lack the specific legal protections to hold perpetrators accountable. That is why House Bill 1134 is not just necessary but urgent.

Today, I testify before you my own personal experience, not for myself but on behalf of all past, present, and future victims of doxxing. For several months of 2024, my private life was invaded by someone I had never even met—a new resident of North Dakota with a violent criminal history. This individual, a complete stranger to me, targeted me in a deliberate campaign of harassment. It started with my phone number and home address being posted in fabricated Craigslist ads, and them posing as me in messages to men across the country seeking sexual encounters. I started to receive predatory phone calls and text messages from these men, not knowing if they also had my home address. But it didn't stop there. They escalated their efforts by sending religious missionaries to my home and signing me up for spam calls, emails, and countless online services, resulting in a relentless daily onslaught of unwanted communication that made me feel constantly exposed and vulnerable.

This harassment didn't stop with me. It extended to my family and their small businesses, causing further disruption and anxiety. The impact of these actions was profound—physically, financially, and mentally.

Physically, I lived in a perpetual state of fear. The stress caused me to lose my appetite, and I dropped a significant amount of weight. Sleepless nights became the norm, and the constant anxiety took a toll on my overall health. I developed other health issues as a result of this unrelenting fear.

Financially, I had to take a setback in order to afford legal representation for the permanent restraining order. The costs of hiring an attorney, combined with missed work due to my instability and lack of mental focus, added to the burden. I found myself struggling to maintain the financial stability I once had.

Mentally, the impact was perhaps the most profound. I had to implement therapy and psychological interventions to help me regulate my nervous system and bring myself out of a perpetual fight-or-flight state. The mental health toll of this experience has been immense, and I continue to work on recovering from the trauma.

In response to this harassment, I was forced to seek legal representation and file for a restraining order to protect myself and my family. And yet, even with clear evidence of the perpetrator's actions, navigating the legal system without specific anti-doxxing laws proved to be an uphill battle. The lack of legal protections for victims like myself is a glaring gap in our justice system.

This is not just my story. Across the nation, countless others have faced the devastating consequences of doxxing. Journalists, activists, politicians, and everyday citizens have been targeted, their lives disrupted, their safety compromised.

Currently, there is no specific federal statute that explicitly criminalizes doxxing in the United States. States like California and Illinois have enacted laws to address doxxing under broader harassment and cyberbullying statutes. But in North Dakota, victims are left without clear legal recourse to hold perpetrators accountable for this specific crime.

House Bill 1134 offers us a path forward. This proposed legislation explicitly criminalizes the dissemination of personally identifying information with the intent to intimidate, abuse, threaten, harass, or frighten someone. The bill defines "personally identifying information" to include sensitive data such as home addresses, phone numbers, Social Security numbers, and employment locations. Under this bill, disseminating such information would be classified as a Class A misdemeanor, with increased penalties if the doxxing results in bodily injury, serious bodily injury, or death.

Importantly, House Bill 1134 applies to all electronic communications within or accessible from the state of North Dakota. This means that perpetrators who weaponize digital platforms to harass and endanger others would finally be held accountable under state law. The bill provides much-needed clarity on what constitutes doxxing and ensures that victims have legal recourse to protect themselves and their families from this harmful behavior.

As our dependence on digital platforms grows, so too does the need for laws that address the evolving ways in which these platforms can be weaponized. Doxxing is not just an invasion of privacy; it is an act of terror that can leave lasting scars. By passing House Bill 1134, we can take a decisive step toward protecting our community and ensuring that no one else has to endure what I and so many others have experienced.

Ladies and gentlemen, I urge you to support this bill. Let's stand together against doxxing and for the safety, dignity, and privacy of every North Dakotan.

Thank you for your time, and I'll stand for any questions.