

Good morning, Chair Klemin and House Judiciary Committee. My name is Rachel Sinness and today I am testifying as a citizen of the State of North Dakota in opposition to HCR 3013.

I am the proud mother of two smart, kind, and talented children who are active in their schools. I am an attorney, musician, and teacher. I volunteer and have been a leader and entrepreneur in my community. In the past, I even campaigned and knocked on my neighbors' doors to ask how I could better serve North Dakota. I was raised in North Dakota, attended North Dakota schools for undergraduate and law school, and remained in North Dakota to pursue my career and raise my family.

My spouse is one of the most giving, compassionate, and beautiful human beings I know, who works hard and gives back to our community; coaches our son's baseball team; genuinely cares for others and never hesitates to lend a helping hand; rescues animals; who just last week helped save a woman's life in a vehicle accident; and who has literally given the shirt off their back to others in need. Together, we do our best every day to teach our children to be kind, giving, and thoughtful individuals who also contribute to their community.

That said, my spouse and I have committed our lives and contributed in positive ways to better our state in much the same way as so many other North Dakotans. The only thing that might set us apart from a majority of other North Dakotans is that we are both women. Why are we less worthy of having our marriage recognized in our own community and state, to which we have contributed so much? Why should we not be afforded the same legal recognition?

Legally, this Resolution will not take away my marriage. Not now, or not yet anyway. Its language feigns to make a neutral point about judiciary overreach; it proposes that legislators, not the judiciary, are the proper arbiters of whether certain rights are granted to their constituents. Ironically, its whereas clauses—numbers 3 and 4, namely—also reiterate that dignity is “innate” and “all men are created equal.” Ostensibly, the legislature, as the arbiter, alone decides whom has innate dignity and which men are created equally.

In short, the Resolution insists that the “issue of marriage” is one that should go back to the state—“the people,” while simultaneously pontificating about the only definition of marriage that its authors find acceptable: that marriage is between one man and one woman. Period. Despite the fact that “the people,” to the tune of 59% of North Dakotans, favor a broader definition of marriage. www.prii.org/research/views-on-lgbtq-rights-in-all-50-states/

I am first and foremost a mother. A wife. An attorney, musician, and teacher. A North Dakotan. And I plead with you today also as a member of the LGBTQ+ community to not be fooled by the insincere rationale of “overreach” touted by this Resolution. Please don’t legislate away what little dignity and equality we’ve been allowed thus far. And finally, please don’t let us resent giving so much of ourselves to this state; legislation like this sends an insulting message that despite our contributions to or sacrifices for North Dakota, its lawmakers don’t care to protect us the same as everyone else.