

Dear Members of the House Human Services Committee,

I am writing to oppose HB 1144 that “would amend and reenact section 15.1-06-21 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to transgender student accommodations and restroom use in public schools; and to provide a penalty.”

Through our entire lives, all of us have used bathrooms that are not designated for males or females. Those have been in our own homes or the homes of friends and relatives. No one felt this was an issue in any way whatsoever.

This amended measure, like its original version, seems to serve no purpose except to harass and intimidate already vulnerable people. I was one of the faculty advisors of the NDSU gay and lesbian student group from 1992-2006. Since 2017 I’ve coordinated the Red River Rainbow Seniors oral history project, “Breaking Barriers: Harvesting LGBTQ Stories from the Northern Plains.” A sadly frequent refrain in those interviews is how isolated and fearful those gay, lesbian, and transgender people felt as youngsters growing up in rural North Dakota. This bill only intensifies that fear.

The hundreds of LGBTQ people I’ve met over the years, many of whom are now dear friends, just want to live their lives without being harassed and discriminated against.

I also have a 34-year-old transgender granddaughter who was born in North Dakota, but now, thank heavens, lives in Minnesota. She struggles every day with overt and covert discrimination, even there.

Please be compassionate and empathetic for our vulnerable youth.

Sincerely,

Larry R. Peterson, PhD  
Professor Emeritus of History, NDSU