

Chairman and members of the Senate Education Committee

Greetings chairman and people of the committee.

My name is Abigail Kraft of Bismarck and I'm here to respectfully request that you give a Do Not Pass recommendation for HB 1144.

This new law aims to cost both the young people of our state a place to use the restroom, many of which already exist, and the taxpayers, since school districts will be forced to remodel, which will waste even more of our tax dollars simply to comply with a new state law that only benefits those in politics and a token for the misinformed. This law that will punish the mental health of our youth and the taxpayers simultaneously, simply to score some political points. This is not how North Dakota operates.

News outlets like Fox News routinely cherry pick the handful of stories where negative incidents have occurred in order to paint all transgender people as bad and defenders of transgender youth as some sort of evil, "woke" child abusers. They run the same propaganda stories over and over to demonize all transgender people and their defenders as if everyone needs to conform to their morals. I am a Republican who voted for President Trump three times, and I think this whole charade to demonize groups of people in our society and state is one of the most disgusting things I've witnessed. We are better than this in North Dakota, we lead by example, not following a couple of misinformed people on this topic like President Trump and Riley Gaines. Just check either Twitter for a litany of unrelated stories that consistently demonize transgender people and mocking them for simply being themselves. On a daily basis, you can go to Fox News and catch a couple transgender stories that are always presented in a negative light to try to stoke more division, hatred and fear which strayed far from their original talking point about college sports. So now in North Dakota, we're supposed to fall in line and believe that these newly built bathrooms are bad? Where does this nonsense end? What about our children being bullied in schools? If we can stop our children from being bullied, don't we do what we can to stop and prevent it? The ridiculous national culture war crusade against transgender people at the expense of our citizens' own mental health is all this bill comes down to. This bill will also cost the school districts of this state millions of dollars to come into compliance with the new law.

According to a Williams Institute study, North Dakota has approximately 500 transgender youth between the ages of 13 and 17. Sticking strictly with the mental health aspect of our youth, how is this fair to them? Should they be forced to use a bathroom that doesn't align with their gender so they can be bullied and assaulted? Should they have to be ostracized by using a third option of using the bathroom in the teacher's lounge if this bill comes into law and IF the school districts make an accommodation? Should they have to be bullied because the state wanted to make a political point to our citizens? Should our transgender youth refrain from drinking milk, juice and water so they don't have to worry about needing to use the restroom while at school?

I am going to share this point again from our Governor that I provided in my other testimony: Governor Armstrong himself said there is a difference between gender identity and biology. He also said this in a debate with candidate Merrill Piepkorn, quote "Dress however you want. Be who you want to be. This country is a fantastic, weird place, and I think it is great."

If this bill passes, you are going to be putting it on the back of Governor Armstrong to take a stand for our youth, showing him that you sent this to him to force him to make a stand. Are you going to be comfortable making him either go back on his word to pacify a sliver of the party base or will he stand up for all the students of North Dakota and veto this bill? I think this bill should die in the Senate to prevent this from happening and to protect your youth as well as save the taxpayers money from numerous potential school remodels. What we currently have in place is in line with our deeply held values of respecting all of our fellow North Dakota citizens, and I respectfully request you give a Do Not Pass recommendation and other Senators who may vote on this bill to vote a resounding NO.

I will also again state as I have in previous testimony that regardless of what happens with this bill, I hope opposition testimony provided at these hearings can become a starting point with the citizens of North Dakota, that we all come together and have conversations about people and our differences, and how there's no reason to fear someone unlike yourselves.

Thank you for your time,

Abigail Kraft

Bismarck – District 32