

Dear Members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to HB1144.

My name is Paul Breiner and I am a registered architect practicing in the State of North Dakota. My primary area of focus is K-12 schools. I have been involved in dozens of school projects across the state.

This language of this bill would prohibit single stall restrooms. This type of restroom serves several purposes. These include, but are not limited to, family restrooms used by fans and spectators during sporting events, convenience restrooms located within the classroom for pre-school and kindergarten age kids, and staff restrooms.

As an architect, I practice Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). CPTED is an internationally recognized approach to reducing crime by implementing principles in the built environment. One of those principles is “natural surveillance.” Rather than relying on security cameras and other electronic monitoring, which does little to stop crime, natural surveillance is an eyes-on approach allowing a space to be watched by the people in the area. This bill directly contradicts this principle. Communal sink and wash areas allow teachers and other school staff to monitor more of the area around restrooms. This reduces opportunities for bullying, vandalism, and other undesirable behaviors. Private stalls maintain a student’s privacy.

This bill would cause undue hardship for school districts that currently have these facilities. Restrooms are one of the most expensive spaces to renovate. I would rather have schools spend their financial resources on their academic programs and equipment than on changing their restrooms in response to a law that does not actually promote the safety of students.

Finally, this bill increases risk for our transgender students by forcing them into uncomfortable situations. From personal experience I know kids who would rather hold their bathroom needs than use the school restroom. Not only is this bad for their physical health, it is bad for their mental health.

Overall, this bill is vague, reduces safety and security, causes a financial hardship to school districts, and targets a segment of the student population.

Please give the bill a Do Not Pass.

Thank you,

Paul Breiner, AIA
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