

Dear Members of the ND Senate Education Committee and Senator Michelle Powers,

I am writing to express my opposition to House Bill 1144. I am an educator and have seen firsthand how unisex bathrooms benefit all children, regardless of gender. The new Moorhead high school has unisex bathrooms where each stall is an enclosed "room" to allow all students privacy. Those "rooms" are grouped together, along with unisex washing stations. This set up not only allows for privacy for all students, it also eliminates students gathering in groups inside the bathroom where bullying can often take place. It eliminates teachers having to monitor inside the bathrooms as well. This concept itself is based around students' needs and safety and would benefit every child.

I am testifying not just as an educator but most importantly as a parent of a transgender son. My child transitioned when they entered high school. It has been a long and difficult road, and not a day goes by that I do not worry about his safety and wellbeing. Because his high school does not provide unisex bathrooms, my child faces the inability to use the restroom throughout the school day. He does not use the female restroom because his classmates know him to be male, and he does not want to make his female classmates uncomfortable. However, he cannot use the male restroom because he doesn't feel safe in an unmonitored space. He knows he is a target for bullying and violence because there are male students who have expressed hatred towards him. As a result, my son does not eat or drink in the mornings before school, nor does he eat or drink anything at lunch. He abstains from all eating and drinking because he does not want to be put in a position where he has to use the restroom. This abstaining has led to my son being significantly underweight. It also affects his ability to concentrate and learn at school. If my son had access to unisex bathrooms, he would be able to nourish his body like other students. He deserves to have the dignity to be able to use a restroom that allows him privacy and protects his safety. I urge you to protect him and all students by voting "no" on HB 1144.

Sincerely,

Amy Perdaems-Martodam