



Testimony on HB 1144
National Association of Social Workers – North Dakota Chapter
Senate Education Committee
March 24, 2025

Chairman Beard and Members of the Senate Education Committee:

The North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW-ND) strongly urges the Senate to **reject HB 1144**. This bill represents an overreach by the government and threatens to undermine the rights and well-being of transgender and gender-nonconforming youth, directly opposing the core values of respect, dignity, and equality that should be afforded to all children.

HB 1144 is discriminatory and harmful to transgender and gender-nonconforming youth. It restricts their access to school facilities that match their gender identity, which further marginalizes an already vulnerable group. These harmful policies have long-lasting effects on their mental health. According to The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health, nearly 80% of transgender and nonbinary youth report experiencing discrimination. This discrimination leads to severe emotional distress, contributing to higher rates of **depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts**.

Every child deserves to attend school in an environment where they are respected, supported, and able to thrive. Denying transgender and gender nonconforming students the recognition of their identities, including the use of their preferred pronouns and access to gender-appropriate facilities, is not only harmful but detrimental to their emotional and mental well-being. Research consistently shows that when students are affirmed in their identities, they experience greater safety, belonging, and overall well-being. In contrast, policies like HB 1144 foster feelings of rejection, isolation, and distress, which can have long-term effects on a child's emotional health.

Schools should be places where all children, regardless of their gender identity, feel valued and can learn without fear of exclusion or discrimination. Policies promoting inclusion, respect, and support are essential for the mental and emotional health of all students.

NASW-ND calls on the Senate to vote **DO NOT PASS on HB 1144**. This bill infringes on the constitutional rights of all students, and its provisions will only deepen the discrimination and marginalization that transgender and gender-nonconforming youth already face. We urge lawmakers to prioritize policies that uphold the rights, dignity, and well-being of all children, ensuring that every student has access to a safe and inclusive learning environment where they can thrive.

Respectfully,

North Dakota Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers

The Trevor Project. (2022). *2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health*.