

I am writing to **strongly oppose Senate Bill 2244**, which would require written parental consent for students to receive instruction or attend presentations related to gender stereotypes, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or sexual relationships. As a local educator of nearly twenty years and a mother of a third-grade son, I am deeply concerned about the negative impact this bill will have on our students, educators, and the future of our state.

I am a passionate advocate for all students and their right to feel seen, heard, and respected for who they are. My son, though only in third grade, already understands that all people matter, and that we all deserve representation, no matter our gender identity or sexual orientation. He learns every day that empathy, respect, and understanding are cornerstones of the community we live in, and I believe that our schools should reflect these values by providing students with accurate, inclusive, and supportive education.

This bill would create an additional and unnecessary layer of bureaucracy in our already overworked education system. Teachers already face a multitude of challenges in their classrooms, often balancing large class sizes, limited resources, and increasing pressures. Requiring written consent for lessons on important topics such as gender identity and sexual orientation will only add to their burdens. It will force educators to focus on paperwork instead of meaningful engagement with their students and their academic growth. I have seen firsthand the impact of such burdens in my own work and through my role as a faculty advisor to my college's LGBT+ Club for over ten years.

Throughout my tenure as an advisor, I have heard from countless students who feel marginalized, misunderstood, and often pushed to leave the state due to the restrictive and harmful nature of policies like SB 2244. Many of these students, who are either allies or a part of our LGBT+ community, have expressed that it feels as though the laws being passed here do not want them to stay in North Dakota. We are losing the voices, perspectives, and talents of some of the brightest young people in our state because of these kinds of policies that make them feel unwanted and unrepresented.

By limiting the instruction and dialogue around gender identity, sexual orientation, and related topics, SB 2244 will only reinforce harmful stereotypes and contribute to an environment where many students feel they must hide who they truly are. Instead of protecting children, this bill isolates and stifles important conversations that can help students develop empathy and understanding for people who may be different from them. It sends the message that certain people, particularly those from the LGBTQ+ community, are not worthy of representation in our schools.

In the long run, this bill will not only harm our students, but it will also drive educators and future leaders out of North Dakota. We must be a state that values and uplifts all of its citizens, especially its young people, and that includes ensuring that all students see themselves reflected in the world around them, both in their studies and in their communities.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to oppose Senate Bill 2244. We have the opportunity to create a more inclusive, empathetic, and respectful state for all North Dakotans, and I implore you to reject this bill in favor of policies that will better serve the needs of all our children.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Erin Price, Bismarck, ND