

Dear Committee,

I am a lifelong resident of North Dakota, raised on a farm and educated in a rural school. I treasure the experiences that upbringing provided. I am also a queer woman, which has shaped my perspective on living and thriving in this state. Holding both of these identities can be challenging at times, but they fuel my deep desire for a better, stronger North Dakota—a North Dakota that gives its young people a reason to stay, build their lives, and contribute to their communities. I fear that passing this bill would do the opposite.

As I see it, this bill is both unnecessary and harmful to students, teachers, and the broader school community. Teachers are already overworked, and requiring them to provide materials for lessons—materials that often evolve daily—adds yet another burden to their already heavy workload. Parents already have avenues to engage with their children’s education and the school system. This bill does nothing to enhance those opportunities, making it redundant and unhelpful.

I am particularly troubled by the sections of the bill addressing gender, sexuality, and pronouns. These provisions could create an environment of mistrust between students and teachers, putting vulnerable children at risk. For many young people, the ability to confide in a teacher about personal matters is crucial to their safety and well-being. Requiring teachers to report on aspects of a student's identity—particularly to parents who may hold discriminatory beliefs—could lead to emotional or physical harm for these children. This bill risks stripping young people of the safe spaces they rely on at school, with devastating consequences for their mental and emotional health.

Moreover, this bill empowers individuals with harmful intentions. It provides parents who may approach these matters in bad faith with more tools to intimidate teachers and school staff. Teachers, already stretched thin and underpaid, would face the threat of legal action for perceived violations. This disproportionate response undermines the collaborative relationships that should exist between parents and educators. Instead of fostering communication, this bill encourages conflict and creates an adversarial dynamic.

Every provision in this bill seems to reflect an attempt to micromanage and control children and teachers beyond what is reasonable. This governmental overreach prioritizes control over trust, collaboration, and the well-being of our students and educators.

For all these reasons, I strongly urge the committee to issue a **DO NOT PASS** recommendation for this bill. North Dakota’s children, families, and educators deserve better.

Respectfully,

Kayla Coenen