

Mr. or Madam Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Hannah Carlson, and I am from Bismarck, ND. I cannot support ND HCR3013 and urge a “DO NOT PASS.”

I have proudly called North Dakota home for all 31 years of my life. But what I am even more proud of is my five years of marriage to my wife. She is not a North Dakota native, but she has called this state home for the last eight years. She is a phenomenal 9-1-1 dispatcher for the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services at State Radio—an asset to the state in many ways. She is a trainer, a leader, and was even voted Dispatcher of the Year by her peers. I could go on, but that is not the point.

We have built a life together—a life that was legally granted to us before we ever met. In that time, we have joined our lives financially, medically, and in countless other ways.

Growing up, my parents always said they hoped I would find a love like theirs. While my wife may not be Prince Charming, I did find my fairy tale. Loving her until one of us takes our last breath is something I am blessed to do. While I hope that day is many decades away, I am grateful for the security that *Obergefell v. Hodges* provides—ensuring that we are protected in all the ways we have built our life together. When the time comes that we must part, we deserve to remain protected—medically, financially, and legally.

Justice Kennedy said it best, and we proudly displayed his words at our wedding:

“Marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death. It would misunderstand these men and women to say they disrespect the idea of marriage. Their plea is that they do respect it—respect it so deeply that they seek to find its fulfillment for themselves. Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization's oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right.”

We ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law.

For 31 years, I have been proud to call North Dakota home. Friends and family assured me that what is happening right now with HCR3013 would never happen. Yet, here we are. It *is* happening, and for the first time, I do not feel proud to call North Dakota home. My elected officials have made it painfully clear how they feel about my existence by bringing this resolution forward.

Although reports vary slightly, there are an estimated 20,000 to 28,000 members of the LGBTQ+ community in North Dakota, with upwards of 12,000 of us in the workforce. I cannot speak for all of us, but I can say this: We will go where we are wanted. Last year, North Dakota was the sixth most moved-from state. In 2024, our state had a net gain of 4,835 people—5,126 of whom were international immigrants.

If you are married, I ask you to think of your spouse. Think of the joys you have shared in marriage. Would you not be offended if someone told you that you should settle for a domestic partnership or a legal directive as the only hope of tying you together at the end of life’s journey? What if you took a trip to another state where your marriage was not recognized, and the unthinkable happened—leaving you without the ability to care for your spouse?

I am thinking of my spouse. I am thinking of every young woman like me who knows she isn’t looking for Prince Charming—that her fairy tale looks different. I want better for them. I hope they never have to stand in front of strangers, pleading to be seen as equals. I hope for them long, healthy marriages and equal dignity in the eyes of the law.

Thank you,

Hannah Carlson