

Committee Chair Diane Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I strongly urge a DO NOT PASS recommendation on HCR 3013.

There are a lot of reasons to urge this recommendation. For now, I will choose to emphasize how something like this affects business and overall perceptions of North Dakota.

I am a productive real estate agent in Fargo, ND and I have helped many LGBTQ clients buy and sell homes over my ten years in this work. Without fail, every single one of those clients has discussed with me their hesitations to live in our state because of the real possibility that North Dakota may not at some point recognize their marriage. Searches for new homes have been put on hold to watch a legislative session shake out. Other times clients have eliminated the possibility of a home search in North Dakota altogether, choosing to stay put or focus on living in Minnesota instead.

The ability of my clients to simply not choose North Dakota is unique to the Fargo-Moorhead community, but it doesn't change the fact that if folks have a reasonable alternative to feeling unwelcome, and can instead live in a community that accepts them and makes them feel safe, the choice is fairly easy.

Although North Dakota has an affordable cost of living and safe communities, we are not an otherwise attractive destination for a new generation of young families and workers. This state cannot afford to NOT do everything right. We are a flat, cold, and spread out state. We are aging and our rural and mid-size communities are hemorrhaging populations. And now, we are about to show the nation what we think of gay marriage. How can we hope to compete with other states for growth if we show that we reject a significant portion of the population? I hope we make the right decision and improve our image as a state that welcomes everybody and respects their absolute right to marriage.

Many of us love North Dakota for a variety of reasons. I can't put it to words very easily, but the short of it is that I feel at home here and I can see the potential for this state. HCR 3013 aims to damage the heart and worth of this fine Midwest state. Please, I urge a DO NOT PASS recommendation.

Thanks for your time and service to the state,

Ryan Dodd  
District 45 resident