

Dear Chair Larson and the members of the Judiciary Committee,

I write today to urge a “Do Not Pass” on HRC 3013. While I currently reside on the Moorhead side of the river, I formally called Fargo my home for many years and continue to call it my home as the communities of Fargo and Moorhead are closely intertwined. I strongly support the rights of our LGBTQ+ community members, and believe this resolution is antithetical to the values of Fargo and the state of North Dakota as a whole.

The concurrent resolution states that the Declaration of Independence recognizes human dignity as innate, and that *Obergefell v. Hodges* “undermines this vision by declaring that citizens must seek dignity from the state.” From first glance, this argument makes little sense. If human dignity is innate and seeking dignity from the state undermines the very vision of our founders, then why is this legislation targeting only queer couples and not seeking to end the institution of state-recognized marriage altogether?

As a society in the United States, we have entrenched the rights and responsibilities of married couples within the law and made them accessible only through the government recognized institution of marriage. Before the enactment of the Defense of Marriage Act, the U.S. Government Accountability Office identified 1,049 federal statutory provisions where benefits, rights, and privileges were dependent on marital status. The benefits of these provisions can only be experienced by couples legally recognized as married by the government, and they *do* confer dignity upon their recipients.

For example, they allow married couples (straight and gay alike) the power to make healthcare decisions for their spouse, and the right to visit them in the hospital. They ensure that married couples have joint parenting rights, shared property, and child support. They are what allow spouses the ability to take funeral and bereavement leave, and the right to make funeral arrangements for the spouse who has passed.

I urge you to search within yourself and think of what it would mean to you if you were unable to be at the bedside of your partner as they passed. The helplessness you would feel at not being considered a parent to your child. This is the despair that you are resigning your constituents, the queer residents of North Dakota, to if HRC 3013 moves forward.

The attempt to remove these rights from some, but not all, of the married couples in North Dakota lays bare the truth that it’s not the idea of needing to seek dignity from the government that is at issue here. If it were, the fight would be against the institution of government-authorized marriage as a whole. We cannot deny that the benefits afforded to married couples under the law are protective and necessary, and they are rights that every married couple in the state of North Dakota deserves.

I once again urge you to vote “Do Not Pass” on HRC 3013, and thank you for your time, consideration, and service to the state.

Rachael Harvey