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Subject: Testimony Regarding Senate Bill

Dear Senate Judiciary committee members:

I am writing to express my opposition to HCR 3013, which proposes that the Supreme Court of the United States in *Obergefell v. Hodges* was incorrect in its interpretation to rectify the unequal treatment of same-sex couples under the law and thus should be told to change it back to an exclusionary practice. Frankly, even in summary, it is clear that this bill is misguided, most glaringly in its failure to address the issues raised within the Supreme Court opinion, including the historical context informing the move towards marriage equality. A vote for this bill is a huge step backwards as all North Dakotans deserve the protections and benefits of marriage, no matter diverse religious opinion.

My husband and I are North Dakotans through and through, proud of the communities that helped us grow into the people we are today and proud of our marriage. In 2015, we married 48 years after *Loving v. Virginia* that ruled bans on interracial marriage were unconstitutional, a landmark case that is younger than both our parents. It's almost impossible to think that at one time, our marriage would have been considered unlawful in parts of the country as my husband and I from different racial backgrounds. My rights as a woman in my marriage have changed drastically throughout our country's development, which has strengthened marriage and its responsibilities, not weakened it. As discussed in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, marriage as an institution has evolved as American society has evolved in our understanding of justice and the human experience, quelling fears based on limited perspectives and instead unifying in support of human rights.

As cited in this bill, I, too, believe in the religious freedoms granted by the Constitution; however, the aims of this bill seem to undermine that concept by putting one religious perspective above the rest. During the *Loving v. Virginia* case, religious opinions were also levied against interracial relationships, as "unnatural" in the eyes of God. My own religious integrity is not compromised by granting marriage equality because my religious values are my individual right to practice in my own life. It begs the question how religious freedoms are being infringed upon in expanding marriage equality and why it is necessary for the government to exclude same-sex couples based on the religious opinion of others. The only perceivable goal of this bill is to prioritize the point-of-view of one religious faction and not to improve the lives and freedoms of all North Dakotans and Americans. This bill is frivolous in nature and actively hurts our communities, leading to further division.

In sum, I strongly urge you to **REJECT** HCR 3013. Thank you for your time and consideration regarding North Dakota's role in upholding marriage equality.

Teresa BlackCloud