



TECHNET
THE VOICE OF THE
INNOVATION ECONOMY

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January 22, 2021

Honorable Chair Robin Weisz
2639 First Street SE
Hurdsfield, ND 58451-9029

Honorable Chair Weisz and Members of the House Human Services Committee:

RE: TechNet Opposition to HB 1298

TechNet is the national, bipartisan network of technology companies that promotes the growth of the innovation economy by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and 50 state level. TechNet's diverse membership includes dynamic American businesses ranging from startups to the most iconic companies on the planet and represents more than three million employees in the fields of information technology, e-commerce, clean energy, gig and sharing economy, venture capital, and finance. TechNet is committed to advancing the public policies and private sector initiatives that make the U.S. the most innovative country in the world.

I am writing today on behalf of our membership in opposition to HB 1298, as well as all attempts by the North Dakota Legislature to introduce and pass discriminatory legislation. Our member companies strongly believe any legislation which explicitly or implicitly targets LGBTQ+ people is an economic liability for the state of North Dakota. These exclusionary bills are particularly troubling while we are dealing with so many other pressing workforce and economic concerns amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

We're troubled by these anti-LGBTQ bills that could hurt our workforce and their families. We need our workers and their families – including any transgender members of their families – to feel welcome in the state where we operate. Discriminatory legislation like HB 1298 negatively impacts our ability to recruit and retain the best and brightest employees, and discourages local investment. We recognize the work North Dakota has done to help the technology sector grow and be competitive in a national and global economy, and we caution legislators from doing anything that would make it more challenging to compete for the talented and highly educated workers many of our companies are looking to hire.

As a nation, we decided long ago that discrimination is wrong and that everyone should have the same opportunities to succeed in life—and that should include transgender youth and their families. Transgender kids, like other students, deserve the same chances to learn teamwork, sportsmanship, leadership and self-discipline, and to build a

sense of belonging with their peers. When we tell transgender girls that they can't play girls' sports—or transgender boys that they can't play boys' sports—they miss out on this important childhood experience and all the lessons it teaches. HB 1298 will negatively impact non-transgender kids, too, by allowing any student to be subjected to invasive medical tests if their gender is called into question.


Operating in an inclusive state matters to our bottom line and to our values because we need all of our workforce and customers and their families to be welcome and safe, everywhere we operate, at the workplace and in their communities. TechNet members will continue to oppose all exclusionary measures that would damage North Dakota's reputation and make it more difficult to invest and create job opportunities within the innovation economy.

Our member companies are proud to continue our work with lawmakers to ensure North Dakota is a vibrant, competitive, and welcoming place for our customers, employees and their families. We strongly encourage you to not pass HB 1298.

For a complete list of TechNet members, visit: <http://technet.org/membership/members>.

We look forward to our continued engagement on this important issue.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Samantha Kersul', with a stylized, flowing script.

Samantha Kersul
Executive Director, Washington and the Northwest
TechNet