

Greetings Chairman Weisz and Committee Members,

I am writing to encourage lawmakers in North Dakota to reject HB 1298, which excludes transgender students from competing in the sport of the gender they identify with. Growing up in North Dakota, sports were a vital part of not only my physical development but also my social and emotional development. I ran cross country and played baseball at Fargo North and continued on to play baseball at NDSU. These experiences produced lifelong friendships, taught me the value of hard work and comradery, and provided the water my budding self-esteem needed. Simply put, without sports, I wouldn't be who I am today and many positive aspects of my life would have been wiped out before they ever got started.

We need to consider the detrimental effects of excluding transgender students from competing on sports teams that align with their gender identity. The loss of the social benefits of sports combined with the exclusionary message the state is sending will undoubtedly make the already tough lives of transgender students that much more difficult and in many cases lead to increased depression and a feeling of diminished self-worth (transgender suicide rates are significantly higher than the general population).

Transgender students should have the same opportunities I have had while playing sports in school. Adopting the exclusionary stance of HB 1298 will do nothing but bring hurt and pain to transgender youth in North Dakota. Please reject HB 1298.

Sincerely,

Aaron Seelig