

Greetings Chairman Weisz and Committee Members,

As a former North Dakota student-athlete, I was extremely disappointed to learn about North Dakota House Bill 1298, as this bill discriminates against transgender youth from playing on sports teams that align with their gender identity in North Dakota. North Dakota should strive to accept and include people, as opposed to limiting participation in athletics. My own experience as an athlete in North Dakota has provided positive benefits that continue to this day. Every North Dakota student deserves the chance to participate in athletics.

I ran track from fourth grade until college at NDSU, and I walked away from that experience with invaluable skills that continue to benefit me in my career as a Communication Professor at a community college. To this day, if I think of some challenging task I need to complete, all I must do is think of grueling track workouts to realize that what I need to do really isn't that hard. Track has given me a lot of grit and the ability to put things into perspective. I also gained the ability to work with others in small groups (e.g., relay team), and that experience is invaluable in my workplace. I also gained the power of applying positive self-fulfilling prophecies that continue to give me confidence to this day. I consistently tell myself, "You can do [insert task here]," and I visualize achieving that goal. I learned that skill through my involvement in track, as I worked hard to beat my own personal records in each race I ran. Finally, I'm lucky enough to maintain several long-lasting friendships from my experience on NDSU's track and field team. For that, I am extremely grateful.

I can't imagine how heartbreaking it would be as a student or a parent of a student who is transgender to learn that they are not allowed to participate in athletics like their peers. House Bill 1298 is discriminatory, and it sends a hard, cruel message to kids: you can't be who you are and play sports... I also am greatly concerned about what this bill says about North Dakota to the rest of the country. Dismissing this bill is vital for opening opportunities to *all* student-athletes in North Dakota, regardless of gender identity. North Dakota state legislators, please dismiss HB 1298.

Sincerely,

Anne Zmyslinski-Seelig