

January 24, 2021

Dear Committee Members:

I know several teens who live in North Dakota who are suffering now due to ignorance, hatred and unlawful acts by their fellow North Dakotans. Transgender teens suffer all because people in their communities and state wide fail to see that these kids are trying desperately to be their true authentic selves. Transgender kids are just like any other kid. Transgender kids want to be in sports, clubs and any other activity that they find interesting or gravitate to just as their peers do. There is no other reason or motive but to just have the same experience as any other kid in North Dakota. These kids want to play sports because they are drawn to that sport. The kid might be talented in that sport or want to develop the skills to play with their friends and classmates. Why is that so strange or difficult to understand?

House Bill # 1298 takes away that chance for these kids to not only participate in a sport of their liking but also takes away the chance to learn and participate as a member of a group. There is learning that is valuable in participating as one of many that must work together to achieve a common goal. Kids learn to communicate, to share not only duties but responsibilities in such a setting as a team would offer. Kids learn that they live amongst others who live differently from them and that exposure opens their eyes to not only economic differences as well as family dynamics. This is also a valuable learning opportunity that they will carry with them throughout their life.

This bill also adds additional stress and anxiety to transgender kids, which is detrimental to them. I have talked with several transgender teens in North Dakota who feel despair and are upset that they not looked at as equals to their cis peers. Transgender kids have taken to cutting themselves or contemplated suicide because of how they are treated not only by their community but also by their school. Bullying is a zero tolerance in our schools yet faculty, staff and administration and cis peers who bully, harass and yes, have even committed illegal acts towards transgender kids within the walls of North Dakota schools. Transgender kids must attend school and a school sport is one of a few bright spots in their school day that they could focus on and excites them. This bill is taking away any chance for these kids to grow and develop skills and come away with a sense of belonging and contribution to the communities they live in.

This bill is wrong and will cause harm to these kids. Anyone who is educated on transgender will see how this isn't helpful to anyone in North Dakota but only fosters hate, ignorance and gives the public a false impression that transgender kids want to play in sports that they identify in just to have an edge or step up on cis team members and those that they would compete against. Education would remove such ideas and fear. Education would help open the eyes, minds and hearts of many here who are behind this bill as well many who live in North Dakota.

Before you vote please, I encourage all of you, talk to a parent of a transgender kid; talk to a transgender child and hear from these people. These kids have stories that would make you sad, angry or disgusted. The parents fight for the rights of their transgender kid while other teens easily and without effort enjoy the very rights this state is trying to revoke.

Thank you.

Kristie Miller