

24 January 2021

Megan Casper
833 50th St. S.
Fargo, ND 58103

To whom it may concern,

I am submitting this testimony in firm opposition to bill **House Bill 1298**, being heard by the Health and Human Services Commission on Monday, January 25th, 2021.

My name is Megan Casper and I am a resident of Fargo with two small children. I also work with children and teens, from ten years old to high school age. I have been around children, taught children, and taken care of children all my life. I also double majored in Elementary Education and Religion at Concordia College.

As a champion and advocate for children and teens, reading this bill made my heart feel sick. House Bill 1298 states that athletes wouldn't be able to play for a sports team that aligns with their gender identity—which would be nothing less than absolutely devastating to the children and teens I serve.

Sports are a vital and vibrant part of any child's development. Participating in sports fosters community, relationships, fellowship, and teamwork. For many of the students I've worked with, their lives wouldn't be complete without sports. During the times when sports were suspended or canceled—many students reported feeling more anxious, depressed, and withdrawn. Students form strong friendships through sports, and their coaches are often some of the folks that leave the greatest lasting impact on their childhood and teen years.

For children and teens who are transgender—life isn't easy. According to the Trevor Project, trans youth reported significantly higher rates of suicidality, victimization, and depression, as compared to their cisgender peers.¹ Growing into who they are, discovering their strengths, spreading their wings—these are all things that every youth should experience throughout their childhood and teenage years. **By barring transgender youth from playing with the sports team of their gender identity, we are saying they don't matter, that discomfort and lack of understanding is worth more than their growth, development, and well-being..**

¹ <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/2019/02/22/research-brief-data-on-transgender-youth/>

House Bill 1298 is a huge injustice to the youth of North Dakota. I pray mercy, grace, and love win this day and that this bill is not adopted by the commission. Thank you for your time and for hearing my testimony.

Sincerely,

Megan Casper