

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

Sixty-seventh Legislative Assembly
North Dakota Senate Judiciary Committee
North Dakota House Bill 1298 Hearing

“A BILL for an Act to create and enact a new section to chapter 14-02.4 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to participation in athletic events exclusively for males or females.”

Senate Judiciary Chair Larson, Vice Chair Dwyer, Members Bakke, Fors, Heitkamp, Luick, and Myrdal, Greetings. My name is Kevin Tengesdal from District 35 here in Bismarck. I am writing in opposition to North Dakota House Bill 1298 (NDHB1298) before you today.

NDHB1298 is a bill to create and enact a new section to chapter 14-02.4 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to participation in athletic events exclusively for males or females. Representative Ben Koppelman, District 16 West Fargo, Building Contractor, introduced the bill to the House Human Services Committee with “The trend is increasing nationwide, and as all trends do, they eventually come to North Dakota.” He views the bill as a proactive measure against “shifting national winds.”

Transgender residents of North Dakota are not a “shifting national wind” coming to North Dakota. They are our family, neighbor, and friends. Gender identities and expressions have been here well before colonists started occupying the state. North Dakota legislators should not pass policies discriminating against and banning youth from playing sports because they are transgender. This policy establishes roadblocks for students simply because people do not understand the scope of what it means to be gender diverse.

NDHB1298 intentionally excludes transgender and intersex youth from sports. Like every student, transgender kids thrive when treated with dignity and respect. Youth sports programs teach young people about leadership, confidence, self-respect, and belonging to a team. Medical experts, sports associations like the NCAA and the International Olympic Committee, and school administrators state that policies, as proposed by this bill, are harmful and profusely unnecessary. There is absolutely no viable or just reason to support this bill in any form. The only reason to support this policy is fear, bias, hatred, or bigotry.

Residents of North Dakota must be better than this. We support fairness, freedom, and understanding. We can celebrate youth sports, protect transgender kids from discrimination, and provide young people the opportunity to access the lessons and opportunities that sports offer. I urge you to give NDHB1298 a DO NOT pass recommendation. Targetting our young people for who they are is destructive and against our core values as North Dakotans. North Dakota’s gender-diverse kids, who are already struggling and dying while legislators play political games, deserve our respect and support.

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