

March 15, 2021

The Honorable Diane Larson, Chair

North Dakota Senate Judiciary Committee

Testimony before Chair Larson and Committee Members, March 16, 2021

I'm writing to oppose passage of House Bill 1298. I am the proud parent of two children that participate in multiple youth sports in West Fargo, ND. This past weekend my 10 year old was in our state capital to compete in the ND State Swim Meet. Next weekend my 13 year old will participate in West Fargo at the 11 and older ND State Swim Meet. As West Fargo Flyers, their swim meets are governed by USA Swimming policies. USA Swimming largely adopts the International Olympic Committee policies on transgender athletes. These policies are well thought out by experts at the international level. House Bill 1298 would effectively end USA Swimming competitions in the state of North Dakota for my athletes and hundreds of athletes statewide.

In West Fargo we have one of the finest swimming facilities in the country in the Hulbert Aquatic Center. We host regional competitions that bring in swimmers from around the country and, with that, hundreds of thousands of dollars for our swim club and our local economy. Even with the proposed amendments to House Bill 1298, our swim club would not survive and our Olympic pool that was once used by Michael Phelps would be empty.

The collateral damage caused by the passage of House Bill 1298 on youth sports in North Dakota would mean the loss of millions of dollars annually to the local economies around our state from not only USA swimming, but USA hockey, USA wrestling, and any other national or international organization that is out of bounds of this unnecessary bill. It would also devastate our young athletes that just want to compete and alienate voters like me.

As a husband, a father of North Dakota athletes, and maybe someday a grandfather of a North Dakota athlete, I cannot sit back and let the North Dakota Legislature strip away opportunity from athletes in our state. Please VOTE NO to the House Bill 1298.

Sincerely,

Jeremy Engelstad