

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you on behalf of HB1298. I am urging you to vote no on this important matter. I care about the youth in our state as I know you do. I am not asking you to make a statement on whether or not you agree with transgender identification. That is not the matter at hand. The truth is, we have students in our midst who identify as transgender and they are my concern.

I am asking you to please consider the message that this bill sends to students who are already vulnerable. There is much misinformation and fear surrounding transgender students. Studies have shown that transgender athletes pose no physical threat and they have no advantage over cis-gender athletes. A New Zealand study published on October 13, 2016 states:

The majority of transgender people have a negative experience when engaging in competitive sports and sport-related physical activity.

There is no direct and consistent research to suggest that transgender female individuals (and transgender male individuals) have an athletic advantage in sport and, therefore, the majority of competitive sport policies are discriminatory against this population.

There are several areas of future research required to significantly improve our knowledge of transgender people's experiences in sport, inform the development of more inclusive sport policies, and, most importantly, enhance the lives of transgender people, both physically and psychosocially."

Because studies have not proven that transgender athletes pose no harm, then why would we want a bill that does harm a portion of our students? The North Dakota High School Activities Association already has a policy in place for transgender athletes. If the organization that oversees athletics can have a policy in place and encourage participation, then why would we contradict them?

I am sure you have already researched much of this topic, but here is another document from the ACLU that addresses myths surrounding transgender athletes. <https://www.aclu.org/news/lgbt-rights/four-myths-about-trans-athletes-debunked/>

I understand that this is a complicated issue, one that I do not fully understand myself. However, in my role as a pastor, a mother, a mentor, and a human being, I long for opportunity for everyone. The world is changing. Transgender people have been in our midst since the beginning of time - they are just now trying to live openly. They are not predators. They are not 'different'. They are people trying to play sports that they love. They already face enough hate and discrimination from peers and adults. Why would we wish to legalize and empower that disdain?

I wish to thank you for the hard work that you do on our behalf. Thank you for taking the time to read my correspondence. Thank you for living into this part of your vocation that God has called you to. Whether or not you agree with me on this matter does not change the fact that we are siblings in Christ and I pray that we can continue to work to make North Dakota the best place it can be. I just happen to believe that HB1298 does not belong.

Grace and peace,

Ivy Schulz