

RE: Opposition to HB 1298

Good Morning Chairwoman Larson and Members of the Committee,

I am Brandi Hardy and I am the Legislative Coordinator for North Dakota Human Rights Coalition (NDHRC).

Today, I am here to share that NDHRC is opposed to HB 1298. A bill that targets our transgender youth and their ability to participate in sports.

This bill does not represent North Dakota values.

HB 1298 is harmful, discriminatory, and unnecessary

Let's take a moment to think about who this bill targets. Children. It targets children. Children who are trying to navigate friendships, interests, and acceptance from their peers. This bill is adding unwarranted pressures to our children.

Why do kids play sports?

First and foremost, sports are fun. They are challenging and rewarding. There are many important life lessons learned in sports; such as leadership, confidence, self-respect, and what it means to be part of a team.

By passing HB 1298, you would be singling out and making a group of kids more vulnerable to bullying, rejection, and violence. This will lead to higher rates of self-harm and suicide, which are already significantly higher with our LGBTQ students. In fact, roughly 22.7% of non-LGBTQ+ students have attempted suicide, 7% being successful. LGBTQ+ youth are five times more likely to attempt suicide and are 4-6 times more likely have a serious injury, poisoning, or overdose from these attempts.

HB 1298 violates already existing policies, federally and statewide.

North Dakota High Schools Activities Associations (NDHSAA) has already established a regulation to ensure ALL students have access to any school activity they wish to participate in, including sports. These regulations were set into place on November 20, 2015. That was six years ago.

Similar bills to HB 1298 have been introduced in over 20 states and only passed in one, Idaho. After Governor Brad Little signed the bill into law, it was immediately challenged in federal court;

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Hecox v. Little, which is now on appeal at the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. This legal fight has had **significant** costs for Idaho due to litigation fees.

If HB 1298 should become law, it will be likely to be extremely expensive for North Dakota and a waste of our taxpayer dollars. Dollars that could be far more useful to support the economic development of our state and retain young adults looking for a state to call their home.

Discrimination is NOT a North Dakota value, yet we have HB 1298 telling the nation and the world that our state leaders are trying to make it one.

NDHRC urges the committee to vote DO NOT PASS on HB 1298. If there are further questions regarding my testimony, my contact information is listed below.

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Cited Sources

- 1) Trevor's Project -
<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/preventing-suicide/facts-about-suicide/>
- 2) North Dakota High School Activities Association -
file:///home/chronos/u-ee19b8eb14b41076d1d6d79d4d4f890a837a35aa/MyFiles/Downloads/NDHSAA_Transgender_Student_Board_Regulation.pdf