

Dear Chairwoman Larson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tiffany Hardy and I am writing today to express my strong opposition to HB 1298.

As a woman raised in North Dakota playing in most sports offered in my small town, I understand the benefits of having the opportunity to play sports with my fellow teammates while my parents cheered proudly in the stands. I remember the reactions my parents would make when I made a basket or had a great hit. I remember celebrating our wins and mourning our losses with my fellow teammates. Wouldn't we want that for every one of our kids?

Our state has always prided itself on being hard-workers. Playing sports is not just about scoring the big three pointer or having that set point, it's training for everything else in life. Playing sports in high school is like having your first job. Your coach is the boss, teammates are your co-workers, the fans are your customers and the opposing team is your competition. By taking away the opportunity for kids to play on the teams that match their gender identity, you are teaching kids that diversity is not important in life when in fact, the tools of diversity are life long.

When I think of HB1298, I think of the kids who it affects. As you may already know the NDHSAA has current regulations set into place regarding transgender athletes. Changing these regulations that have been working for the past six years takes away the right for transgender athletes to be viewed as "equal." It takes away diversity.

Having two kids of my own, I understand the importance of standing behind them with an open heart and helping them be comfortable in their own bodies. As a mother of a transgender son I've learned the misunderstanding of gender identity is often matched with hatred. That hatred bleeds into our community in ways that make it difficult for others to learn. It becomes a vicious cycle that is so hard to break that it breaks us all.

When our son first came out to us, I can't say I understood it right away. We learned that we ourselves needed to do research. We spoke to our son's therapist, teachers and experts in the community. We mourned. We needed to take in the gravity of what being transgender in ND would mean. We knew he would have difficulties in school with other kids not understanding and we were right.

"Tranny the Transformer" was the first derogatory phrase he was called. It has only gotten worse since then. Our son is 14 years old. Forteen. I ask you at what age does your child stop being your child? At what age do you stop worrying about their safety?

With that, I am asking for you for a "Do Not Pass" on HB 1298 for it singles out real people, real stories and real kids.

Tiffany Hardy
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