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Senator Diane Larson, Vice Chairman Dwyer and Members of the Committee

For the record my name is Olivia Whitney. I am a 14 year old student athlete from Grand Forks..

I have been a swimmer since I was 8 years old and I have played baseball or softball since I was 5. As a competitive swimmer and softball player, I have played with girls and boys in both sports. I have never felt uncomfortable or unable to compete. If I had a teammate or competitor who was better than me, boy or girl, it made me work harder and be stronger.

I am submitting testimony against HB 1298 in any form. I do not want this bill stopping me from being able to swim or play softball. Playing sports is supposed to be about having fun, making friends, being competitive, and help with stress. Swimming and playing softball do all these things for me. When I am not playing sports I am less happy and less able to deal with stress.

In English class we are learning about argumentative writing, our final assignment for this unit was to choose something that we felt strongly about and make arguments for or against our position using evidence from sources to back up our arguments. I chose to do HB 1298 because I want to keep sports in North Dakota. Here are some of the arguments I am putting into the essay.

Most people like to play or watch sports, some even say it is good for kids and young adults to play sports. But North Dakota is trying to change that. House Bill 1298 targets transgender athletes. The bill sponsors say this is about protecting female athletes but with the way the bill is written it will ruin many athlete's potential careers and mental health. House Bill 1298 is wrong, unconstitutional and should not be passed.

Section 1a of the bill states "State may not allow an individual who was assigned the opposite sex at birth to participate on an athletic team sponsored by or funded by

the state, political subdivision or entity and which is exclusively for females or exclusively males. The first reason this bill is bad is because most sports facilities in North Dakota get some support from state money. For example, the Hyslop pool at UND, the Hulbert Aquatics Center in Fargo, the Scheels Center in Fargo and most of the high schools in the state would not be able to be used.

My second reason is that high school sports would go away because they also get some support from state money. Sports are an important part of many high school students' careers and for their spectators. It is something for students to do and for students to go to and have fun after a long day at school. In North Dakota sports help the economy because you have to travel so far and many people stay in hotels. In 2019, the Fargo - Moorhead area had about \$10 million from spectators, and youth hockey reserved 12,000 hotel room nights that brought in \$2.5 - \$3 million in visitor spending. But Republican senator David Clemens says that money isn't a problem and that "transgender participation doesn't set a good example for West Fargo youth." Money does matter to North Dakota businesses. More important is this bill creates a worse example by not letting kids play sports. Playing sports means kids learn teamwork and communication and coaches teach this to younger people.

North Dakota also has the least amount of openly Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender residents in the country. Which makes this bill even more unnecessary. North Dakota only has about 1.7% of their residents who openly identify as a part of the LGBTQ+ community with an even smaller percentage of them identifying as transgender. Being transgender is not a contagious disease that other children will get by being around someone who is trans. It is something that they are born with and that

they feel like they are in the wrong body. Most of the time after someone who is transgender has finished hormone therapy you can never really tell that they were the other gender. It is also called Gender Dysphoria. Gender Dysphoria is “a term that psychologists and doctors use to describe the distress, unhappiness, and anxiety that transgender people may feel about the mismatch between their bodies and their gender identity.”

Part of the reasoning for the bill is that it will make it more fair for the girls and the boys, but part of the transition is that they take hormone therapy so they can be the other gender. So saying that a transgender female would still be stronger than other girls would simply be wrong, the hormone therapy makes it so that they have the same or as close to the same muscle mass as a female. It is also wrong to assume that a female who wants to do wrestling or football would be upset that they lost to a male. They know going into it that they have less of an advantage, but they do it anyways because they love it. They push the limits of what they are told growing up so that they can do what they love. It is not only transgender people that the bill is hurting, it is limiting any female athlete who is doing things what they love. Bill sponsors say the bill is to make it more equal for all genders but it does not and it also means that the transgender athletes discussed in writing this bill can never play a sport and that is unfair.

House Bill 1298 is not only wrong but it is discriminatory. A bill that is being written to not allow transgender athletes play a sport they love, the way they want to, in a state that has the lowest number of LGBTQ+ people in the country is not right. Not only that but the sponsors of this bill say it will make it more equal for females because

they know that they might be beat by a transgender person is very unlikely and does not make it uncompetitive. The bill also has ties to hate crime groups like the Promise to America's Children and Alliance to Defend Freedom who are anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-trans groups. Why, with all of the negative outcomes for ND athletes and discriminatory nature of this bill, would we want our state to pass it?

As a high school, club and local community athlete in North Dakota I ask this committee to vote 'Do Not Pass' for any version of HB 1298. As an athlete I do not feel this is a topic that needs a law to oversee. Our high school and club sport programs already know how to work with us as athletes and create teams that are competitive, welcoming and supportive.

I realize I am not old enough to vote so I want to say thank you for taking time to read this testimony and part of my English essay because I feel strongly about being able to swim and play softball for my school and club teams.