

North Dakota

Travel Alliance Partnership

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MEMBERS

America's Best Value
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Friends of Lake Sakakawea
Greater Grand Forks CVB
Hampton Inn & Suites Minot
Airport
Jamestown Tourism
Leistikow Park Campground
Lone Butte Ranch/Log Cabin
Vacations
McKenzie County Tourism
Minot Convention & Visitors
Bureau
Missouri Valley Heritage Alliance/
Fort Abraham Lincoln
Foundation
Municipal Airport Authority
of the City of Fargo
National Hospitality Services
Newman Outdoor Advertising
Norsk Hostfest Association
North Dakota Association of
Rural Electric Cooperatives
North Dakota State Fair
North Dakota Tourism Division
(ex-officio)
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Roosevelt Park Zoo
State Historical Society of
North Dakota Foundation
Theodore Roosevelt Medora
Foundation
Valley City CVB/Sheyenne RV
Scenic Byway
Vern's Rental
Williston CVB

Testimony of Terri Thiel

Chair, Travel Alliance Partnership

In opposition of HB 1298

March 16, 2021

Chairman Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Terri Thiel, and I am the chair of the ND Travel Alliance Partnership (ND TAP). ND TAP is a coalition of travel industry stakeholders, including CVB's, state attractions, businesses, and other interested stakeholders, in this number three industry of North Dakota's economy.

ND TAP wishes to voice its opposition to HB 1298. The bill, as written, would have negative consequences to the state's travel industry if passed. Specifically, the bill would threaten sporting events and negatively impact multiple businesses and industries in North Dakota including hotels, restaurants, small businesses, and tourism destinations who rely on visitor spending.

HB 1298 would prohibit transgender athletes from participating on sports teams and forbid public venues from hosting sporting events that allow transgender participation on teams exclusively for males or females. The bill would also prevent CVB's and other organizations that receive public funding from sponsoring events that allow transgender participation. These provisions would jeopardize youth sports in North Dakota as many teams and clubs currently make accommodations for transgender athletes.

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us, unfortunately, what a year without events, including sports, looked like. For communities and industries reliant on events, the lockdown was devastating. According to the North Dakota Tourism Division, the pandemic led to \$1.2 billion in losses for North Dakota's tourism industry, resulting in \$94 million in lost state and tax revenue. While the lockdown was only temporary, HB 1298 would compound its many consequences, essentially serving as a long-term "lockdown" on sporting events, further straining athletes, communities and businesses.

HB 1298 also eliminates the rights of sporting clubs to adopt their own policies governing transgender athletic participation. USA Wrestling¹, for example, which hosts its tournaments and events in Fargo and draws hundreds of visitors to the community, has a transgender policy to fairly address the concerns of both athletes and parents. USA Hockey², USA Gymnastics³ and USA Swimming⁴, similarly, all have policies in place to address trans-inclusion. HB 1298 would threaten the future of their events in North Dakota.

ND TAP urges a do-not pass on HB 1298. Its passage would jeopardize the future of youth sports in North Dakota, dramatically slow, if not reverse the tourism industry's post-pandemic economic recovery and impose further economic strain on hundreds of hotels, restaurants and small business owners. North Dakota is already weary from the COVID-19 lockdown. HB 1298 would negatively impact industries reliant on the health and viability of sporting events in North Dakota.

1. <http://content.themat.com/forms/USAWrestling-Transgender-Policy.pdf>
2. https://cdn3.sportngin.com/attachments/document/8a0b-1766565/USA_Hockey_Transgender_Athlete_Eligibility_Policy.pdf?ga=2.109113287.37295163.1548347375-712316268.1548347375
3. https://usagym.org/PDFs/About%20USA%20Gymnastics/transgender_policy.pdf
4. https://www.usaswimming.org/docs/default-source/diversity-inclusion/5.-other-related-documents/recommended-practices-for-gender-diverse-minors.pdf?sfvrsn=c32c5332_20