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**Testimony on HB 1298
Senate Judiciary Committee
March 16, 2021**

Chairwoman Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, for the record my name is Nick Archuleta, and I am the president of North Dakota United. I am appearing before you today to urge a Do Not Pass recommendation for HB 1298.

Madam Chairwoman, I am the first to admit that I am not an expert on the physiology and science as they pertain to transgender youth or anyone else for that matter. I am thankful that there are many people here today that do have that expertise to share with you and all North Dakotans. As a teacher, however, I have gotten to know something about young people in general. I know that they are stressed, particularly as they are working through the current pandemic. I know, too, that they do not like to be singled out for attention, particularly if it is negative attention. And I know that they like to have a voice in matters that affect them.

HB 1298, as I read it, increases the stress that transgender young people feel, casts a negative but bright light on them, and to the best of my knowledge, was written without any input from the transgender community or any consideration of its impact on the emotional and mental health of transgender youth.

Members of the Committee, this bill, like the 20+ bills like it being considered in statehouses across the country, are misguided. This legislation appears to be part of yet another larger cultural fight between conservatives and progressives. The problem is that some of the most vulnerable young people in the country are getting caught up in the crossfire. Please consider the following:

- The Trevor Project, which advocates for LGBT+ youth, maintains that young trans people are less likely to consider suicide if they are supported in their identities. HB 1298 does not support young trans people and makes them less secure in their identities.
- As in the Idaho case, if HB 1298 becomes law, ND will likely end up in years long and expensive litigation.
- HB 1298 is a solution to a problem that does not exist. Our ND High School Activities Association has already adopted a nationally recognized and scientifically informed policy on the issue of transgender athletes. Further, there is not a single case in ND that claims that anyone was disadvantaged in competition due to the participation of a transgender athlete.



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Chairwoman Larson, teachers and education support professionals have an obligation to educate every child that walks, rolls, is carried through our schoolhouse doors, or is learning remotely. They embrace that obligation whole heartedly and work tirelessly every day to ensure that all students feel safe, valued, welcome, and loved throughout their educational career. We want them to participate in school sponsored activities, including sports, because all students want to belong to something bigger than themselves. It is where they build community, friendships, and confidence in their abilities as human beings. It is where they grow.

HB 1298 turns all that on its head by singling out transgender kids and depriving them of their opportunity to compete in athletics and be treated with the same dignity and respect as their cisgender peers.

Chairwoman Larson and members of the Committee, the beauty of school sports and other school sponsored activities is that they have historically provided lessons that kids carry with them throughout their lives. Let us not let bigotry be among them.

Please give a DO Not Pass recommendation to HB 1298.