

House Human Services Committee

House Bill 1254 – DO PASS

Andrew Alexis Varvel

Written Testimony

North Dakota State Capitol

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Pioneer Room

2:30PM

Chairman Weisz and Members of the Committee:

My name is Andrew Alexis Varvel. I live in Bismarck, District 47.

Here is a story from page 131 of *"The Last Madam: A Life in the New Orleans Underworld"*, a sympathetic biography about the notorious madam Norma Wallace.

"The younger sister of one of the girls asked for a job at Norma's. She was a very pretty girl, younger looking than her seventeen years, small boned and delicate, her face a sweet and perfect oval.

On the girl's first night of work, just before four in the morning, a car slid up in front of 1026 Conti and parked. When the girl finished with her last trick shortly after four, she ran quickly to the car, got into the backseat, and the car drove off. The next evening the car arrived again, same time, parking so that part of Norma's driveway was blocked. Norma looked from the window as her new girl ran out and opened the passenger door. A man and a woman sat in front. It dawned on Norma that the girl's parents were picking her up after work every morning.

Norma figured out that the parents didn't want their daughter running in the Quarter, getting mixed up with dope fiends, and she was sympathetic for a while. But after a few weeks she began to get irritated. 'It looked like hell,' she said. 'My parents knew what business I was in, but even when I was hustling, they didn't come pick me up.' She finally buttonholed the mother one night and asked her what the deal was.

'Well,' the woman said apologetically, 'our daughter has always lived a very sheltered life.'"

This incident is from the late 1950's. That adolescent girl, if alive today, would be in her nineties. Yet, the moral questions she faced then also face adolescents now.

Should we regard the parents who chauffeured their daughter to and from Norma Wallace's brothel to be people who cared deeply enough about their daughter to affirm her choice to become who she wanted to be, or were they abetting child prostitution?

Were these parents helping their daughter's mental health, or were they complicit in putting their daughter into an abusive industry which took advantage of her?

Regardless of libertarian objections that would portray a personal right to rent out access to one's genitalia to paying customers to be basic right and an integral feature of personal autonomy, I think we still have a societal consensus in North Dakota that permitting an under-aged girl to prostitute herself would constitute child abuse.

Even with her seeming consent.

Even with a psychologist's certificate claiming that prostitution helps her mental health.

Even if being a prostitute were integral to that person's gender identity.

And if you were told that prohibiting an under-aged girl from prostituting herself would lead her to commit suicide, would that change your opposition to child prostitution?

Yet, in comparison to prostitution which merely involves renting out access to one's genitalia to paying customers, removal of those genitalia would constitute far more severe, permanent, and intrusive damage. Sterilization cannot be undone.

In North Dakota, even adults are banned from prostituting themselves. (NDCC 12.1-29-03) In contrast, House Bill 1254 is remarkably moderate and restrained, for it only bans sterilization of children. Adults can still turn themselves into eunuchs if they so desire.

House Bill 1254 would class genital removal as a Class B felony. In contrast, existing law against female genital mutilation only calls it a Class C felony. (NDCC 12.1-36-01)

Sex trafficking of an adult is a Class A felony. Sex trafficking of a minor is a Class AA felony. (NDCC 12.1-41-02) In comparison to these offenses, the penalties proposed by House Bill 1254 – merely a Class C felony – would still be comparatively mild.

Not only is the topic of prostitution a good analogy to sterilization, but it is a mild one.

I have read that people can recover from their time working as prostitutes, but I know of no circumstance under which the surgical removal of genitalia can be reversed.

Sweden has turned against puberty blockers. Finland has turned against puberty blockers. Sweden has turned against transgender surgery. Finland has turned against transgender surgery. If the Biden administration truly believed that these new policies constitute human rights abuses, it would not be welcoming them into NATO. The United Kingdom is increasingly restricting these procedures too.

So, it is possible to be a good socialist and oppose the sterilization of children. It is possible to be a good liberal, in the tradition of Mr. Rogers no less, and oppose the sterilization of children. It is possible to be staunchly anti-authoritarian and oppose the sterilization of children. You don't need to be a conservative to take this stand.

Please provide House Bill 1254 with a **DO PASS** recommendation.

Thank you, and I welcome questions from the committee.

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