

As a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in North Dakota, I urge you to oppose HB 1522.

This bill is directly aimed at removing transgender youth from public education.

The bill states transgender youth will only get restroom accommodations and recognition as their gender if they have had gender affirming surgery and written consent from parents. It's incredibly rare for youth under 18 to receive gender affirming surgery. There's no way a trans student can meet these requirements to be affirmed at school.

LGBTQ Youth are more than 4 times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020). This isn't a result of the label, it's a direct outcome of being marginalized and discriminated against. This bill, and others that seek to further limit the LGBTQ+ community directly contribute to the increased risk of suicide.

I've seen this firsthand in my office from youth and young adults who share things like, "I don't belong here," "It's clear I'm not wanted," and "it's stuff like this that makes me want to die." As a mental health provider, I cannot support a bill that contributes to a community where members do not feel entitled to live the lives they are born into. More than half of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously considered suicide in the last year (Trevor Project 2022 National Survey on Youth Mental Health). North Dakota cannot afford to pass legislation that contributes to this.

This is not a bill that recognizes or appreciates a diverse population of North Dakotans and will result in loss of community members. It does not make North Dakota a desirable place to live and is not reflective of the values that most North Dakotans hold toward their friends, neighbors and family members.

I strongly urge you to oppose HB 1522.