

House Judiciary Committee  
SB 2231  
Testimony in Opposition  
Hearing: March 20, 2023

Dear Chairman Members of the Committee:

I write on behalf of the Government Affairs Committee for the Fargo Board of Education and respectfully urge you to vote NO on SB 2231.

The Fargo Public School's mission statement is "Educating and Empowering All Students to Succeed." Inherent in this statement is a commitment that no student attending the Fargo Public Schools will be subject to discrimination, bullying, harassment, and that every student will be accepted, and have the same rights and opportunities to learn and participate in school life regardless of gender, gender identity or expression, race, nationality, or disability. SB 2231 stands in the way of this mission and harms students, schools, and school culture.

The simple act of properly addressing a student by their identified pronouns has a powerful impact towards ensuring a more accepting, respectful, and inclusive learning and working environment. National research suggests that an overwhelming 75% of transgender youth have felt unsafe at school and are more likely to miss school out of concern for their own safety. Transgender students suffer from suicide ideation and attempts at far higher rates than their non-LGBTQ peers. All students—particularly our most vulnerable—deserve to learn in an environment free of sex-based harassment, all students should have the freedom to express and have the school honor gender identity, and all students should be addressed in accordance with their gender identity. SB 2231 is in direct conflict of our school district's commitment to educational justice.

Additionally, SB 2231 Section 2, Part 4's provision that creates an exception only for parental or guardian consultation and approval ignores the reality that these students could face neglect or abuse from their parents and guardians.

We strongly urge you to vote NO on SB 2231.

Sincerely,

/s/Melissa H. Burkland

Melissa H. Burkland

Fargo Board of Education

Government Affairs Committee Member