

## Testimony to ND Legislators on SB 2231 – March 20, 2023

**Chairman Representative Klemin, Vice-Chair Representative Karls, and Representatives of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you on Senate Bill 2231.**

### **“I just want to teach”**

I am Dan Wakefield from Devils Lake, a recently retired high school teacher.

On January 25<sup>th</sup> I submitted written and oral testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee on **SB 2231**. I return today to testify in support of **SB 2231** based on and sharing a limited part of what I personally experienced in education over several years related to important objectives in **Section 2. 15.1-06-21. School policy – Expressed gender. 1-4.**

In August 2022, I became aware of policy changes at DLHS directed by administration to staff during Fall orientation just before the start of classes. The bullet points listed here were stressed by the principal to staff from slides under “What I Told Kids / Parents” (see attachment). Despite the assertion on the slide by the administrator, to the contrary, the community at large was not informed of this policy change nor is it aware now of recent and past concerted efforts by a few individuals to advance LGBTQ... ideology in the school district.

Below the bullet points from the principal’s slides are my commentaries. The intent / expectations of some of these directives appear coercive, violating 1st Amendment rights of staff members.

#### **\*If you don’t know what LGBTQIA+ stands for/means – you better learn.**

*LGBTQIA+ are letters – conventions of speech with controversial meaning and implying in some ways radically revolutionary anthropology that entered public discourse in maybe what – at most the last 1/10 of a second of human history? The terms need to be discussed to arrive at shared meaning and possible agreement as to validity. What in depth does the administrator think those terms mean? The staff? The community? Is there shared agreement on meanings and the implications of those meanings for educating students in the school setting? No*

#### **\*Kids need love and support, quit calling them confused. Be their parent and help them navigate who they are.**

*Were parents in the community asked if they wanted the school to assume responsibility for raising their children? No. Have citizens been asked if they want the school to replace the values of their families with the administrator’s values? No*

#### **\*Your moral compass cannot get in the way of embracing and educating our children.**

*What? Teachers are not to rely on their moral compass in their interactions with students, staff, and their fellow human beings. So, there is no objective moral truth? The morality of every action is relative? Then who decides limits of when staff can be compelled to violate their conscience? Whose moral compass should guide staff when teaching students? The administrator’s LGBTQ... ideology?*

**\*Your religious beliefs are your beliefs. You can hold these near and dear, but they cannot get in the way of your willingness to embrace and educate our children.**

*Religious beliefs don't count? The first amendment to the US Constitution doesn't count? Under what circumstances? Someone obviously needs an explanation of what the Constitution means, and what system of government we live under.*

*So, teachers cannot rely on moral truth or recognized natural law, both foundational to religious teaching and civil and criminal law in guiding their actions? Define embracing and educating. Embracing how? Educating what? There are problems with understanding this platitude if that is what it is and what these statements are meant to convey. Some forms of embracing are damaging. Some educational ideas may be hurtful and conflict with the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians. Who decides for the community – students, teachers, parents, guardians – or the administrator?*

*What does administration mean by "our children" in these bullet points? This is a serious question. Because in staff meetings, on more than one occasion, the principal has stated to staff that churches have declined, and families have declined, so now the school needs to do more to compensate. Staff has objected openly to the practical implications of that statement; because staff, many of them parents themselves, do not want the school to assume or interfere with parents' and guardians' primary responsibility for their children and families.*

**\*We need to move past tolerance! Tolerate is a negative word. We cannot be people who tolerate the beliefs of others or the behaviors of others.**

*Why is tolerance a negative word? It indicates a willingness to allow others, for example, to civilly express an opinion or conduct an action, but not agree with that opinion or action. It is a norm in a free, complex society and as the Founders stress in the Federalist Papers, our system of government is composed of opposing factions and doesn't function without conflict and disagreement. Democracy is often messy. To insist on acceptance, or agreement, or affirmation from others for your own or others' actions or beliefs (ideology) is a form of coercion – the antithesis of tolerance. Compelled speech or compelled thought is not free speech or freedom of thought. Totalitarian societies and governments in our time and throughout history demand and function on conformity of thoughts and actions – thought police impose group think.*

The principal's bullet points below, at last Falls staff orientation, were stressed to staff from slides under "Inclusive Environment" (see attachment). Below those bullet points are my reactions.

**\*Gender Identity, name, state ID (name), testing, etc. ...**

**\*Powerschool [the student on-line directory] will be updated with preferred name/gender. Use those.**

*More evidence of coercion of students' and staffs' speech in the school environment.*

**\*Pronouns**

**\*Some students may request they/them specifically while other want he/his, she/her, etc. ... honor what they ask for.**

*Where is this social engineering coming from? In over a quarter century of teaching, I never experienced any student ask to be addressed by a specific pronoun. Why is this needed? When have any staff become*

*aware of students banging down office doors demanding to be addressed by pronouns? This directive is almost entirely irrelevant and non-sensical. People speak using conventional address in high schools. In school, pronouns are rarely used by teachers addressing a student. Students are addressed by their given name or occasionally by a nickname. To use a recent figure of speech questioning the inanity of this directive: "What is Woman?" In this Brave New World that is being created at DLHS and in some schools across North Dakota, what happens if someone is known to be male or female and cross-dresses and is then not called by the name they want by staff or students? Will not remembering to use one of numerous pronouns now being tried out be considered a serious infraction of policy? Will confusing that pronoun with a new one that is manufactured next week and picked up by a student on social media for use – will that be considered a serious infraction of policy? Will non-participation in gender fluidity preferences, contrary to known biological reality, be considered cause for dismissal or some form of demotion or punishment for staff or students?*

*Compelling the use of pronouns in addressing students (which incidentally serves no practical purpose) is not free speech and is in apparent conflict with the 1st Amendment to the US Constitution.*

*On my exit form last May terminating employment, I was asked to list challenges facing Devils Lake Public School for use by the superintendent and the school board. The number one problem I listed getting in the way of students getting an education was the ever-growing culture of distraction created by ever-growing, unnecessary time-wasting policies and activities in our schools.*

Here are the words of a staff member at DLHS after experiencing Fall orientation before the start of classes:

***"I don't understand why we are doing this. I am just here to teach. I don't care what your sexual orientation is, your religious background, other personal beliefs, or what you want to be called, etc. I just want to teach."***

### **Request of the Legislature of the State of North Dakota**

Given the now apparent threat to citizens' rights under the 1st amendment to the US Constitution that are now being instituted in our schools through policies by a small group of unrepresentative activists, a law recognizing freedom of speech, conscience, and religion for staff and students in North Dakota schools should be enacted with accompanying penalties for intentional infractions.

Footnote:

A 2021 ND high school graduate entering the engineering program at NDSU, during Summer online orientation led in part by gender studies majors, with about 50 other Freshmen were provided and strongly encouraged to pick from a wide range of pronouns for use on campus. He told me none of them were having it. In the Fall, in small group orientation at the dorm, the incoming students were made to introduce themselves using a pronoun by the RAs. RAs later told students they were compelled by administration to make students use pronouns during dorm orientation.



# WHAT I TOLD KIDS/PARENTS

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don't know what LGBTQIA+ stands for/means – you better learn.

need love and support, quit calling them confused. Be their parent and help them navigate who they are.

nts need to be nice to each other, accepting of all, and advocate for needs of self and others.

moral compass cannot get in your way of embracing and educating our children.

religious beliefs are your beliefs. You can hold these near and dear, but they cannot get in the way of your  
gness to embrace and educate our children.

personal views cannot be an issue, a discussion, or a soapbox. Be smart, appropriate and above all – kind.

eed to move past tolerance! Tolerate is a negative word. WE cannot be people who 'tolerate' the beliefs  
ers or the behaviors of others. We need to be patience and kind while embracing and educating our kids!



# INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

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der Identity, name, state ID (name), testing, etc...

Powerschool will be updated with preferred name/gender. Use those.

TQA+ (these are the normal ways the letters are used):

Lesbian – refers to gay women or homosexuality among females instead of using 'gay' as the term as that is widely used to describe males.

Gay – used to describe men and women attracted to the same sex, usually used for homosexuality among males.

Bisexual – a person of any gender is attracted to people of another/several other genders, not simply male liking both female/male.

Transgender – wide-ranging term for those whose gender identity or gender expression differs from biological sex assigned at birth.

Questioning – people uncertain of their sexual or gender identity (sometimes Queer is used as a catchall in this category).

Intersex – someone born with biological sex characteristics that are not traditionally associated with male or female bodies.

Asexual/Aromantic, Agender, and sometimes (Ally) depending on who you talk to – a person who experiences little to no romantic attraction. Ally comes in for those who may not identify as any of the LGBTQI+ pieces but support those who do.

+ stands for everything on the gender and sexuality spectrum that letters and words cannot yet describe.

I can provide you more if you would like!!! These are the main letters/terms but there are so many more. Become educated!  
ouns

Some students may request they/them specifically while others want he/his, she/her, etc... honor what they ask for.

