

Chairperson Klemin, members of the House Judiciary committee, I am Barry Nelson, here on behalf of the Fargo Human Rights Commission to testify regarding SB 2231, and I urge you to vote do not pass on this bill.

The Fargo Human Rights Commission consists of [eleven volunteer members](#) who are nominated by the Mayor and appointed by the City Commission. Each serves a three-year term. The Human Rights Commissioners represent a broad range of racial, religious, ethnic, social, economic, political and professional groups.

Our mission is: The Fargo Human Rights Commission provides leadership and education in areas of civil rights, to eliminate discrimination against persons because of color, creed, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or marital status. It encourages adherence to civil rights through education, conciliation, and mediation. It identifies human and civil rights-related concerns of the public and recommends policies to the board of city commissioners that protect and preserve individual rights.

At its February, 2023 commission meeting, the assembled commission members voted unanimously on a resolution standing in opposition to the numerous bills targeting our Transgender community.

Our opposition to these bills is based on two principles: 1) it is harming our kids, and 2) it is restricting our freedoms.

In support of principle number one, I cite the following: National research tells us that 75% of transgender youth feel unsafe at school and are more likely to miss school out of concern for their safety. The North Dakota Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) data from 2021 indicates that suicide ideation and attempts are disproportionately higher for LGBTQ. Evidence is as follows: middle school students who ever seriously considered suicide: straight – 22%; LGB – 65%; Transgender – 74.7%. Middle school students who have ever attempted suicide: straight – 7.5%; LGB – 29.3%; Transgender – 46.3%.

Passing bills that directly or indirectly target LGB and specifically Transgender students only enhance this environment by further targeting them within schools and community.

It is within the overall context of the numbers and breadth of bills being presented in this legislative body, that we stand in opposition to SB 2231.

This bill flies in the face of everything Fargo Human Rights Commission stands for and against the values that this community purports: freedom and dignity for all.

It intentionally and cruelly targets a population

It represents government overreach

It violates the right to free speech

It bans the use of best practices. It is a proven fact that use of preferred pronouns improves mental health and reduces suicidality.

No clear purpose for the legislation other than to harass and terrorize an already vulnerable population.

As members of the Fargo Human Rights Commission, we affirm our Transgender and non-binary community; we endorse their right to live their authentic self in safety and dignity.

We refute this government sanctioned effort to promote hate and discrimination.

We oppose attempts like this to erase members of the Transgender community, and to purposely and intentionally do harm.

Please vote Do NOT Pass on SB 2231.