



SB 2231

March 20th, 2023

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Chair Klemin and Members of the Committee: My name is Celeste McCash, I am the Head Delegate of Lake Region State College for the North Dakota Student Association, and I am testifying in opposition to SB 2231, which, if passed, will not require a government entity to require an employee to use an individual's preferred pronoun when addressing or mentioning that individual.

The North Dakota Student Association is a student organization established in 1969 dedicated to ensuring students have a voice in policy that affects Higher Education. We consist of delegates from each of the 11 public institutions meeting monthly to engage students in ND Higher Education policy.

Our mission is to empower students, create collaboration between the North Dakota public universities' student bodies, and give a student perspective on higher education policy. Over the past several years, the NDSA has taken several stances on protecting the rights of LGBTQIA2S+ students, with the most recent resolutions passed being [NDSA-09-2223](#), which establishes our organization's priorities for this legislative session, and [NDSA-14-2223](#), which is a resolution in support of transgender student rights.

This bill goes explicitly against transgender students' rights and prevents government employees from requiring employees to call transgender students by their preferred pronouns. This is a personal attack against them, and the use of their pronouns is a matter of showing respect, much like how we as students address our teachers in high school with Mr. and Mrs. and our professors

with Dr. If you were not to call them Dr., Mr., etc., they would feel disrespected. The same applies to transgender students when someone does not use their preferred pronouns. While this bill mentions that the violation of this section is a discriminatory practice, it's the opposite. Failure to accommodate individuals by using non-preferred pronouns is an act that violates traditional etiquette.

SB 2231 only has one outcome for North Dakota: economic losses. Individuals that are a part of the LGBTQIA2S+ community and their families will not consider moving to or continuing to live in our state. The bill will exacerbate the issue of retaining students after completing their higher education, with many seeking a welcoming environment elsewhere. I can attest that SB 2231 and similar bills encourage me to examine a future life outside North Dakota.

Transgender individuals will not only feel unwelcome in North Dakota but unsafe. This bill directly and unequivocally attacks transgender people. If SB 2231 passes, North Dakota will become another state where transgender individuals will feel persecuted. On the national landscape, this will hurt the image of North Dakota. Many citizens of the country will see our state as transphobic, and we will collectively garner a negative reputation. If passed, the bill will dissuade many potential students from attending an NDUS institution. SB 2231 will also damage the retention rates of students in the state and prevent entirely out-of-state potentials from filling the growing gap.

This bill tries to solve a nonexistent problem and harms the LGBTQIA2S+ community. In my college career as a student, requiring staff or faculty to use a student's preferred pronoun has not been an issue I've personally seen. Usually, when requested, staff or faculty members respect transgender students and use their preferred pronouns when asked to do so.