

Testimony in Opposition to HB 1254. I ask that you DO NOT PASS.

I'm a clinical psychologist who had practiced in the state of North Dakota for over 20 years. I treat individuals across the lifespan. Prior to being a clinical psychologist, I was an RN for 15 years.

This bill will be harmful to citizens of North Dakota and its citizens.

Care of individuals with gender dysphoria is complex, nuanced, and individual. Such care involves a team of providers, including mental health providers. Complex, research-based guidelines exist to make decisions about care. Decisions to provide gender affirming care come about over time with the best outcome for the individual in mind throughout care. Individuals without proper training and experience working with individuals with gender dysphoria should not be making decisions about care.

A substantial body of literature exists documenting the benefits of gender-affirming medical interventions, where indicated, for adolescents with gender dysphoria. Over a dozen studies have collectively linked such care to improvements in depression, anxiety, and suicidality. Studies of long term and short-term benefits support this. Additionally, resilience-promoting factors for mental health include having a good relationship with parents, social support, school safety and belonging, and the ability to use one's chosen name. Bills such as HB 1254 will tend to alienate those that identify as gender dysphoric or transgender and potentially worsen mental health issues including suicidality.

I hope you will make thoughtful informed votes on proposed legislation that will be harmful and vote DO NOT PASS.

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