

Testimony in Opposition to HB 1473, HB 1254, HB 1522

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North Dakota Sen Human Services Committee

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Chairman Lee and Members of the Committee:

My name is Christina Sambor, I am submitting testimony on behalf of the North Dakota Human Rights Coalition, the Human Rights Campaign and Youthworks to oppose the various bills set for hearing this morning that seek to exclude transgender students from facilities and limit their medical care.

HB 1473 and HB 1522 both deny a transgender person or student's ability to use the bathroom that corresponds to their gender. First of all, these types of policies are rooted in the idea that allowing a trans person, in particular a trans woman, access to the women's bathroom poses some sort of threat to the safety of women generally. There is no evidentiary support for this inflammatory and discriminatory position. Second, there is no reason that these issues can't and shouldn't be left up to individual school boards to handle. Conservative principles purport to value local control. School Boards and administrators are in a much better position to assess how a particular school district can handle these matters in a way that diffuses harmful speculation and considers the rights of the trans student as well as any concerns of the other students. There is no evidence that this is a statewide problem that requires a broad, discriminatory response.

Additionally, these policies go against the recommendations of many national education organizations such as National School Boards Association, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the American School Counselor Association, the National Education Association, and the National Federation of High School Associations.

Most importantly, we know that affirming transgender students and respecting their rights shows them they are equal members of society, that they are welcome here, and that their worth is not diminished by their school. This is the position that the Legislature should be taking, that we can and will hear from, and uphold the rights of, a group of our citizens who are being unfairly attacked on a coordinated national level.

As to HB 1522, a group of doctors have testified to the scientific validity of safe and well managed care for transgender individuals. Our state policy should be guided by their expertise and compassion, not by fear. Societal changes certainly can be difficult, especially when they involve children, and the desire to make sure we are condoning practices that are helpful, not harmful, is a valid and understandable concern. Those with expertise in this area have provided their clinical knowledge to this committee, and we encourage our policy makers to give their expertise the respect and acceptance it deserves.

For all of these reasons, please vote do not pass on HB 1473, HB 1254, and HB 1522.