

Chairperson, members of the Senate Human Services Committee, here on behalf of the Fargo Human Rights Commission to testify regarding HB 1256, 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.

HB 1256 granted does not single out members of the LGBTQ community. Nonetheless, we stand in opposition to this bill as it would have far-reaching negative consequences. We live in a time and place where already there are many barriers to report harassment or discrimination particularly to members of the LGBTQ community. North Dakota is considered to be one of the most homophobic states in the country. This bill would have a disproportionate chilling effect on anyone needing to raise concerns or issues in an already hostile environment. The bill raises too many "what-if" scenarios, particularly as to who would be the final arbiter in deciding what is "false or frivolous". We need more safeguards, not less in protecting victims of harassment and discrimination. We know already that such complaints are grossly underreported.

Thank you,

Cody Severson

Fargo Human Rights Commission Chair