

HB # 1522

68th Legislative Session

Senators Weston and Beard

Representatives: Dyk, Christensen, Timmons, VanWinkle

I am writing in opposition to HB #1522. The authors who drafted this bill lack any knowledge or understanding of what being transgender is and what the person who is transgender faces living amongst a Cisgender-dominated society. I was born and raised in North Dakota and I am also a parent of a transgender person.

My child went to public schools and I have watched her being discriminated against, have had to report a criminal act that was done to her on school property. We had to deal with the ugliness of her peers, staff and faculty as well. The school administration being one in not one but two school districts. I'm here to tell you there is no such thing as a "safe haven" at school for anyone who is bullied. Bullying is alive and well in North Dakota schools and it looks like the legislative branch is following in step with discrimination and ostracizing kids in our schools.

How many of you know a transgender person or have talked to a parent of a transgender person regarding their experiences in public schools? I dare say none of you have taken the time or even thought of what the transgender person goes through at school each and every day.

By law our kids are mandated to go to school. The kids there are forced to endure ill-mannered children who are raised by people who think if you don't look and act like me, then you are not worthy of respect and so it is ok to bully these people. I know this because my child was bullied. My child wasn't one to act up, cause attention to herself in the contrary, she is shy, quiet and respects authority figures and her peers. My daughter didn't get the same respect she gave others in school.

My daughter would come home and tell me how the day went and more times than I wanted to recall, there was someone's kid being a bully. Whatever happened to the no bullying zone at school? Oh, that is for the Cisgender kids and not meant for transgender people?

My daughter had teachers who outed her in class, and when I took that up with the principal, nothing happened but a verbal hey, don't do that. I asked why this teacher put her lunch account up on the white board in front of the class. This was a history class. The principal couldn't answer that nor would she allow me to address the teacher. Now who is being the bully and allowing the bullies to continue their behavior? The school administration, that's who.

When my daughter was filmed in a bathroom stall, which is illegal. I took that once again to the school and this time I demanded that the Resource Officer be notified because I wanted to file charges. What this Cisgender peer did was illegal. The Resource Officer came, took statements from my daughter and her friend who witnessed the video which was put on Snapchat and Facebook. The CIS peers' mother was called. The mother released the phone to the Resource Officer and he viewed the video. The CIS peer even admitted to doing this and do you know what the school administration told the Resource Officer? Don't call the mom and tell her what you saw.

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The Resource Officer is mandated by law to tell a minor child's parent when a crime has been committed on school property. Does that sound like the school has my daughter's best interest at heart? Does that smack of No Bullying Zone to you? Nope, sure doesn't.

These are just a few examples of what my daughter had gone through and what steps or I should say extent the school did to protect my child. School is supposed to be a safe place for our kids, but I guess that means all kids except transgender kids.

Inclusion is a huge part of school and learning. School is where kids learn about each other and what makes us different. Schools should teach tolerance and acceptance. What this bill does is support the ideology that if someone is different than that person is bad and should be treated as lesser than by removing rights and privileges that the others enjoy. Do you really want to teach the youth of North Dakota that if someone is different from you then it is ok to discriminate against them?

We live in the USA where everyone has the right to be themselves. Apparently, the erasing of rights of a particular sect or group of people in this World history doesn't come to mind to the authors of this bill so let me refresh the memory of those who forgot that Hitler removed the basic rights of Jew. What the author of this bill is doing an attempt to remove the rights of transgender kids.

Another point in history is 1954 when segregation ended. Segregation of blacks from white happened due to the fact that people discriminated against people of color because of the false ideology, lies and hate. We know now that there is no legitimate reason to segregate people due to race, color, ethnic or religion. History is now repeating itself here and now in North Dakota, and why? Because of peoples unfounded fear and bigotry.

This bill violates the civil rights of transgender students in schools. I am personally offended that people say that Cisgender females need to be protected from transgender females. People who say that have never met a transgender person. Cisgender females have been and remain threatened by heterosexual males who occupy various jobs in and out of public schools. I attended a North Dakota High School where a teacher sexually assaulted female students for years, the teacher was married and yet still sought out a female in almost every grade to offend. In contrast, there has never been any incident of a female transgender person attacking and sexually assaulting a Cisgender peer yet FOX News, Facebook, people who stand behind a pulpit and yes, the ignorant citizens of this state say there is a threat. I'm here to tell you there is NO THREAT. Transgender students just want to go to school, learn, use the bathroom and some, **very few**, want to participate in sports. The number of transgender kids in North Dakota isn't large but this bill still does damage to the self-esteem of the transgender person and gives the misconception to CIS people that transgender people are ok to mistreat.

My daughter was born transgender. From her **early days** to present she has always had mannerisms and behaved like that of her older sister. This isn't a fad or a phase and not a way to erase Cisgender females in sports. My daughter doesn't like sports. My daughter is kind, thoughtful and sweet. Nothing in her persona resembles a male. I should know I have lived with her all her life.

I ask you, what are you scared of? Transgender people use the bathroom just like the Cisgender population. We go in and get out, end of story. There isn't any malcontent on behalf of transgender person using the same bathroom as a Cisgender person.

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When will society learn from the mistakes of our past? The KKK fostered segregation. Was it necessary to segregate people of color from whites? Did something horrible happen when integration happened? No, but people love to make up stories and the worse the better. That isn't human nature, that is bigotry and discrimination to the core. The lack of empathy, understanding and acceptance of transgender people will flow over and spread onto other marginalized people such as Native Americans, people of color and of different religion.

By forcing a person who is transgender to use the wrong name, the wrong pronoun and refusing to acknowledge who they really are is devastating to their wellbeing. School is to be a place where the kids are protected, all kids. This bill doesn't protect transgender kids. It makes them outcasts. How would any of you like it if your child was born in such a way that made him or her different and the school let peers bully them, let staff and faculty be cruel and make fun of him or her in class, even go as far as protect someone who committed a crime against your child? You would think that's ok because my child is different so therefore, they deserve it? No, you wouldn't be happy, nor does anyone deserve to be banned from a school function or event, sport even, just because of others' ignorance and preconceived judgements.

This bill also states that accommodations for students who have had gender-affirming surgery just shows how much the authors of this bill do not know. Again, surgery can't happen until the person is 18. In the event that a person who is 18 is still in school, then why must the barrier of using the different bathroom come into play? Discrimination in any shape, form or manner is against the law.

We all are made different, look different, have different likes and dislikes from each other and those differences do not make either one of us deficit. God made us all different for a reason. The differences are to teach us acceptance, tolerance and to extend love and compassion towards one another. We are to learn from each other. Your bill sends the wrong message and if your intent is to cause harm to kids psychologically, mentally and physically then your bill will do just that. Are you willing to live with the consequences? Are you willing to shoulder the responsibility of having kids harm themselves because of your lack of empathy, your imaginary fear that transgender females are trying to take over girls sports in school? School is to be a place of learning, why is the legislative body not focusing on that?

Sit back, put yourself in the position of a transgender parent. Be honest with yourself, would you be ok with this bill? If you did some soul searching, learned the facts and talked to a parent of a transgender person. Put aside your fears, misconceptions of what transgender is and learn the facts.

Kristie Miller
Parent of a transgender