

March 27, 2023

Dear Chair Larson and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Rev. Karen Van Fossan. I am an ordained minister and licensed professional counselor, serving as a pastoral counselor in the state of North Dakota. **I ask that you give both HB 1489 and HB 1249 a Do Not Pass recommendation.**

These bills would bar transgender young people, whether in higher or lower educational settings, from participating in sports in ways that affirm not just their identity—but their being. Transgender people comprise approximately 2% of the population, and these bills place undue strain on an already severely marginalized group.

As other testimony will indicate, the risks of transgender girls out-performing cisgender girls, by virtue of their transgender status, are next to nothing. Considering the efficacy of hormone blockers, transgender girls are not significantly hormonally different from cisgender girls. When transgender girls win, we should celebrate their athleticism rather than disparage their identity.

A few years ago, I was adopted by a young mother and her beautiful transgender child. Having been rejected by their family of origin, they asked me to become their mom and grandma. Due to a fundamental misunderstanding about what it means to be transgender, their family had become unable to love them. As painful as this breach has been for my chosen daughter and grandchild, I believe the real losers in this scenario are the family members who don't get to experience the Halloween costumes, the spontaneous dances, and the joyful utterances (like "I love you, Grandma!") that I now enjoy as a matter of course. I do indeed love my transgender grandchild from the deepest place in my soul.

These bills would have devastating effects on my grandchild, our family, and our larger community. The American Counseling Association, my own ministerial association, and numerous respected bodies advocate for gender-affirming opportunities in schools, families, and social activities for people like my grandchild.

Please vote on the side of my family and vote Do Not Pass on HB 1489 and HB 1249.

Thank you.