

January 24, 2023

Chairperson and Committee Members,

I strongly urge a Do NOT Pass on SB 2231. When a person tells you their name, you use their name to address them. Our names are a major part of our identity. They reflect both how we are known and how we see ourselves within the world. Pronouns are an extension of a person's name. If a person requests to be called a particular name, you call them by that name. The same is true for pronouns. If an individual requests to be called by a particular pronoun, that request should always be honored.

Disregarding a name or pronoun is an act of denying someone the ability to express themselves. This is a violation of the First Amendment – Freedom of Speech. The act of denying or repressing another's identity also leads to a degradation of mental health.

Suicide is the second leading causes of death in North Dakotans aged 10-24. North Dakota ranks 16th in the nation for suicides. We do not need to add any additional sources of mental health degradation. Rather than passing legislation which denies people's identities and drives potential workforce away from North Dakota, we need to do everything we can to reduce our suicide rates and pass legislation which presents North Dakota as a welcoming and affirming state.

I urge a Do NOT Pass on SB 2231.

Sincerely,
Gretchen Deeg
Bismarck, ND