

Dear Chair Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My testimony is in opposition to Senate Bill 2231. I ask that you give this bill a Do Not Pass.

I'm a suicide prevention advocate and this is the fourth bill I'm addressing for approximately the same reason. I want to give each piece of legislation its own space and respond to the specific amendments the bill hopes to make. While I want to respect the process, I feel like the sponsors of these bills are not. And it feels like they're proposing as much as possible with the hopes it'll stress our system and discover what pieces of legislation fit.

I don't think this represents good governance. In what ways should we consider this bill different from SB2188 or SB 2199 or HB 1522? There is some wisdom we can draw from studying history. That history just happens to be the last week and all of the testimony from individuals working within schools and healthcare that have already been submitted on similar issues.

These aren't bills so much as conversations in exploration of exactly where we're comfortable reducing, limiting, or removing rights of transgender and non-binary youth. This bill defines "preferred pronoun" as a pronoun different from a person's assigned sex. That is not how anyone uses that word in common nomenclature. Cisgender individuals use preferred pronouns that match their sex assigned at birth. It's in their emails a lot of the time, with a link explaining why they do it.

The biggest intent I see with this bill is the right to misgender transgender and non-binary youth without penalty. We have research from Trevor Project showing the impact of misgendering youth on suicidality. It is important to understand that misgendering trans individuals is not a value neutral action. It creates psychological and minoritized stress that has an impact on anxiety, depression, and again suicidality. The same way it does for cisgender youth who are bullied by being misgendered.

Kids who are misgendered don't feel safe with teachers who misgender them. The reason we developed guidelines for accepting trans and non-binary youth within schools is related to school belonging, performance, and health. Misgendering youth intentionally is something we understand and recognize as bullying, due to the observable impact it has on youth.

The reason teachers are disciplined in schools for misgendering youth is because these teachers are bullying kids, making them feel unsafe, and otherwise making school miserable or inaccessible from an outcome and data perspective. Kids don't just think - oh no, Mr. Teacher isn't using the pronoun I made up, what a rascal. They think - this person isn't safe and makes me feel awful.

That is why I urge a Do Not Pass. Teachers have a choice in where they go and where they work. There are schools outside of our regulation they're welcome to instill their beliefs on students. Kids don't have that choice. They don't get to leave the environment they feel

uncomfortable in. And when they feel like there is nothing they can do, that is where and why we lose them.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state,

Best regards,  
Faye Seidler