



Dear Chair of Political Subdivisions and Committee Members,

I urge a 'Do Not Pass' on HB 1273 for the following reasons:

1. This is government overreach on local government efforts to protect their community. Whereas these local governments are acting in the best interest of their community by adding further penalties to criminals who break the law because of the victim's protected class, including actual or perceived race, color, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, or ancestry of the victim. Removing this ability for local governments to act on what they believe is the right thing to do to protect their communities makes everyone less safe.
2. Passing HB 1273 will embolden hate groups who have had an increased presence in our state in recent years. As an example, the spread of Patriot Front ([a neo-fascist and white supremacist hate group](#)) crimes in our communities including vandalism and the destruction of property at the [International Market in Fargo](#). Furthermore, this can result in an increase in criminal activity as hate groups will feel their hateful acts are protected.
3. Finally, it must be acknowledged that freedom of speech is not absolute. You cannot shout 'I have a bomb' on an airplane. Speech is action, and when those actions harm people, there should be an appropriate response. By enforcing these ordinances we are not restricting freedom of speech, instead they allow consequences for hateful actions.

Therefore; The North Dakota Human Rights Coalition stands against this bill and urges you to vote 'Do Not Pass'. We cannot rescind these ordinances during a time when [hate crime is on the rise](#). We cannot restrict local governments from doing what they feel is best for their communities, and we cannot allow this law to make our communities less safe.

As Human Rights include freedom of speech and expression, we understand the importance of protecting those freedoms. However, this bill does not make the kind hearted citizens of this state more free. Instead it makes our marginalized communities less free as their security of person is threatened. In closing, I will leave you with this quote from UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

“Addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech. It means keeping hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, which is prohibited under international law.”

— United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, June 2019.

Sincerely,
Dalton Erickson
Executive Director
North Dakota Human Rights Coalition