

Dear Chair Lee and members of the Senate Human Services committee:
I'm writing today to urge you to pass HB 1217, which would decriminalize HIV in North Dakota.

HIV criminalization laws are outdated, discriminatory, and counterproductive. They perpetuate harmful misconceptions, fear, and prejudice, rather than promoting understanding and compassion. These laws also create barriers to essential medical care, including testing and treatment, which are crucial to preventing the spread of HIV.

It's unconscionable that under current North Dakota law, individuals living with HIV can be charged with a Class A felony, face prison time, and hefty fines, even if they're on medication and unable to transmit the virus. This is not only unjust but also ignores the latest scientific research on HIV transmission.

The most effective way to end the HIV epidemic is to address the stigma, fear, and misinformation that fuels it. Decriminalizing HIV is a critical step towards achieving this goal.

By passing HB 1217, you'll be sending a powerful message that North Dakota values science, compassion, and human rights. You'll be helping to create a safer, more inclusive environment for individuals living with HIV, and you'll be taking a crucial step towards ending the HIV epidemic.

I urge you to pass HB 1217 and join the growing list of states that have already repealed their HIV criminalization laws. Together, we can create a more just, compassionate, and equitable society for all.

Thank you for your time.

Chelsea Gagner