Dear Chair Larson and the members of the Judiciary Committee,

I urge a “Do Not Pass” on HCR 3013.

Merriam-Webster-Webster’s Dictionary defines the term “marriage” as the following:
-the state of being united as spouses in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law
-the mutual relation of married persons : **WEDLOCK**
-the institution whereby individuals are joined in a marriage
-an act of marrying or the rite by which the married status is effected
especially : the wedding ceremony and attendant festivities or formalities

The common definition of marriage is by no means bound to any factors based on sex and gender and the union of such spouses poses no threat to our society from a secular standpoint. Cases such as Lawrence v. Texas, 2003, have proven time and time again that moral disapproval is not a valid basis for policing liberties. Similarly, traditional values should have no power to deny present-day marriage rights. As of today there is no legitimate secular purpose that this bill would serve.
This bill is also a direct violation of Separation of Church and State, A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT that prohibits any government from enforcing anything on the basis of favoring one religion over another. This amendment clearly states “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” The bill reflects a motivation influenced by traditional values very commonly held by those of the Christian faith. Defining marriage on this basis amounts to state endorsement of a specific religiously-backed belief, which violates the amendment. Marriage should remain a legal process, not one influenced by the beliefs of one group not everyone practices. Arguments that marriage equality violates religious law have no place in a secular system with Constitutional protections of religious equality. Obergefell v. Hodges granted same-sex marriage as a CONSTITUTIONAL right, not a Christian one approved by God Himself.
Thirdly, and this may already be apparent, the bill is a direct infringement of Civil Rights guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. This amendment guarantees equal protection under the law. In Obergefell v. Hodges the Supreme Court affirmed that denying same-sex couples the same rights as opposite-sex couples is unconstitutional. Enacting such a bill would contradict that ruling by creating discrimination against a specific group, and can and likely will lead to discrimination and more oppression across the state. Think of how this will affect the legal stability of Obergefell v. Hodges in the long run. Think of how this will affect the rights of already married same-sex couples, how it may cause instability for their families, other legal rights unrelated to marriage, and healthcare.
Lastly, consider the harm this will cause to the good citizens of North Dakota who will be affected by this. Consider those who already suffer from discrimination on a less grandiose scale. Consider the many North Dakotan lives the right to marriage has improved over the past decade. Those of you who have been married and love your spouses unconditionally, wouldn’t you think same-sex couples across the state feel the same way?

On a more emotional and personal note, I have lived in North Dakota my entire life and have gotten to know many, many wonderful people. The kindest, smartest, most caring people I know all live here. Some of them are a part of the LGBTQ+ community and some are not. Neither way makes them any less of people, and no law or regulation or belief system should have any power to change that. Denying them the basic right to marry would diminish their dignity and humanity, something I would not wish on anyone. Loving someone regardless of sex or gender should not be a political issue.
Murder is a crime because it hurts lives.
Assault is a crime because it hurts bodies and minds.
Theft is a crime because it hurts bank accounts.
Crime hurts. Ask yourself, what earthly entity does consensual love between people hurt?

Please look into your heart and consider the ramifications of this decision. Actual human beings of the state of North Dakota depend on it.
Overall, be “North Dakota Nice.”

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to our state,
Michael Paul Porter.