



SYNTHESIS.EARTH

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RE: TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB 1298

HB 1298 seeks to bar transgender men and women from competing in athletic events in North Dakota.

All mammals engage in forms of play. Play is an integral way of acquiring knowledge, testing limits, making friends, and learning how to improvise and compromise within the context of a rule set. Animals exposed to a robust play environment are well adapted socially, emotionally, and cognitively. Animals deprived of play environments are developmentally stunted for the rest of their lives.

Athletic competition is a formalized human version of play and has been used for over 100 years in primary and secondary educational settings to help teach adolescents the importance of sacrificing for something greater than themselves. Finding purpose within something greater than ourselves – such as that found in a team sport - is a basic human desire, one that is typically lacking in the rest of our highly individualized culture. Research indicates that those who play youth sports carry with them occupationally advantageous traits that persist throughout their lifetimes.

If passed, HB 1298 would bar transgender men and women in North Dakota from accessing a fundamental state of being – play. If passed, it would prevent them from the opportunity to play competitive school-sanctioned team sports and prepare themselves to be socially, emotionally, and cognitively successful throughout their lifetime.

The proponents of HB 1298 have shown no clear or present benefit from disallowing transgender athletes from competing. Some say they simply seek to maintain “competitive balance”. “Competitive balance” is impossible and does not fall within the purview of legislative action. Certain biological and genetic differences will always exist; some people will be taller, faster, or stronger than others due to certain genetic and biological factors or predispositions. As such, the legislature has not and should not weigh in and dictate which biological or genetic differences do or do not allow for “competitive balance”. Humanity is

diverse; some of us are gifted certain athletic advantages by birth and some are not. The beauty of athletic competition is that we still play the games and strive for excellence regardless of whether we do or do not share in such genetic gifts or biological advantages. Transgender men and women are but two of many possible manifestations of human diversity and as such deserve the same measure of dignity as anyone else.

As has been shown, the societal ramifications of preventing transgender men and women from accessing basic human states of being – not only as adults but also as school children – has very clear negative outcomes both for individuals and for society at large. As such, we urge this committee to put forward a DO NOT PASS recommendation for this bill.

Sincerely,
Ryan Warner
Synthesis.Earth