

March 15, 2021

Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

As leaders, parents and/or community members in Grand Forks, we firmly stand AGAINST HB 1298. This bill targets the youth of North Dakota solely based on their gender identity. In Grand Forks we are working diligently on acceptance and understanding of equity, diversity and inclusivity. HB 1298 introduced by adults, departs from the culture of acceptance we are trying to promote in our schools and devalues members of our community.

HB 1298 will not make sports safer or fairer for any student. Instead, HB 1298 targets and excludes youth who already face high levels of discrimination. Transgender students already experience disturbingly higher rates of bullying, rejection, violence, and even suicide. In fact, one in three transgender youth report having attempted suicide.

HB 1298 is not needed in North Dakota. The North Dakota High School Activities Association already has a vetted transgender student eligibility policy in place that was created by coaches and officials who best understand their students and respective sports, and was approved by the NDHSAA Board of Directors in 2015. Why would legislators micromanage a governing body of athletics?

Members of our educational and broader community have pledged to create environments where students can learn and thrive all the while being accepted for who they are. HB 1298, which targets children who already face discrimination, directly contradicts these goals.

Therefore, we urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to give HB 1298 a Do Not Pass recommendation to protect our young students. Discrimination is not a North Dakota value.

Respectfully,

*Jerry Brenner*, Ed. D., Superintendent, Grand Forks Public Schools

*Michelle Rydz*, Executive Director, High Plains Fair Housing Center

*Maura Ferguson*, President of Lewis and Clark PTO and parent

*Katie Dachtler*, Grand Forks City Council Ward 2

*Robin David*, Bush Fellow and parent