

Christina Sambor
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Testimony in opposition to HB 1298
Senate Judiciary Committee
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Chairperson Larson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Christina Sambor, and I am here today to deliver testimony in opposition to HB 1298 on behalf of Youthworks. Youthworks is a private non-profit youth serving agency serving Runaway and Homeless Youth in North Dakota. In its work with runaway, homeless, trafficked and struggling youth, Youthworks often sees the dramatic impact that social rejection has on transgender youth. Sadly, for many of our trans clients, Youthworks is actively working with them to deal with suicidal thoughts and attempts, most often due to the treatment they suffer at the hands of others who do not understand or who outright reject their identity. In addition to negatively impacting their overall health and well-being, the discrimination suffered by trans and LGBTQ+ youth also causes many to end up homeless and vulnerable to exploitation.

For example, one in five transgender people in the United States has been discriminated when seeking a home, and more than one in ten have been evicted from their homes, because of their gender identity. One in five transgender individuals have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. Family rejection and discrimination and violence have contributed to a large number of transgender and other LGBTQ-identified youth who are homeless in the United States – an estimated 20-40% of the more than 1.6 million homeless youth.

I bring up these statistics to highlight the dramatic effects that discrimination has on trans youth. This bill, in Youthworks' eyes, is not simply about sports, and cannot be viewed as such.

This bill carries with it a message that trans youth cannot be who they are and do the things they love to do. It encourages others to point out their gender identity, and to exclude them from some aspect of society for it. These types of laws and attitudes cause direct harm to trans youth, and in Youthworks' experience, quite literally threaten their lives and their safety.

Youthworks strongly urges the Senate Judiciary Committee to vote "do not pass" on HB 1298.