

As a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in North Dakota, I urge you to oppose HB 1254.

LGBTQ Youth are more than 4 times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020). This isn't a result of the label, it's a direct outcome of being marginalized and discriminated against. This bill, and others that seek to further limit the LGBTQ+ community directly contribute to the increased risk of suicide.

I've seen this firsthand in my office from youth and young adults who share things like, "I don't belong here," "It's clear I'm not wanted," and "it's stuff like this that makes me want to die." As a mental health provider, I cannot support a bill that contributes to a community where members do not feel entitled to live the lives they are born into. More than half of transgender and nonbinary youth seriously considered suicide in the last year (Trevor Project 2022 National Survey on Youth Mental Health). North Dakota cannot afford to pass legislation that contributes to this.

I urge the committee to listen to the testimony from the experts in the field, who are well versed in the standards of care for transgender individuals.

Youth who aren't able to receive puberty blockers have to undergo more surgeries than peers who were able to. This is costly, time consuming, and brings on increased risk.

North Dakota banning these services will not prevent people from seeking the care they need, it just makes it harder, more expensive, and difficult for those with less privilege.

North Dakota will lose citizens to other states if this bill passes. Families will move out of state to get the care they need. North Dakota may also lose providers who contribute to the health and well-being of many citizens, not just the transgender community.

This is not a bill that recognizes or appreciates a diverse population of North Dakotans and will result in loss of community members. It does not make North Dakota a desirable place to live and is not reflective of the values that most North Dakotans hold toward their friends, neighbors and family members.

I strongly urge you to oppose HB 1254.