

Members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Greg Demme. I am a Pastor who resides in District 3, at 5220 14<sup>th</sup> St SE, Minot, ND. I urge you to please render a DO PASS on House Bill 1254.

In recent years, the perception has taken over that progressive social policies have cornered the market on compassion and that the most conservative policies are far more involved with amassing money and things than about caring for people, or worse, that conservatives just hate people who are different. This perception is especially strong whenever we hear discussions about such topics as transgenderism. We're told, "If we really care about people, we'll affirm whatever a person wants to think about their gender because to do otherwise is to harm them, and would subject them to even more difficulty than they're already facing."

There are even pediatricians who are trying to say that this bill would force them to violate their Hippocratic Oath, because not allowing them to use hormonal or surgical treatments on such patients would cause them harm.

The reality, however, is that gender dysphoria is **not** a medical condition. I repeat: "gender dysphoria" is not a medical condition. While there are true cases of Disorders of Sex Development, or DSD, requiring medical intervention, they are extremely rare. According to Dr. Michelle Cretella, a pediatric researcher and immediate past executive director of the American College of Pediatricians, "When we talk about transgenderism, we're not dealing with any biological or medical condition. We are speaking about belief."

And if we're speaking about belief, then we must ask the question: Is it compassionate to encourage minors—not even adults, but minors—to permanently, irretrievably alter, even mutilate their bodies through chemical or surgical means, especially knowing that neither their brains nor their bodies are yet fully formed? Is it compassionate to encourage them to succumb to societal pressures that heavily influence children and youth in such a way that if they were ever to change their mind, change their belief about themselves, it's already too late? They've already done permanent damage to their bodies. Is that compassionate? Is it compassionate to encourage children and youth to brutally reject their bodies the way their creator made them? No, I contend that is **not** compassionate. Rather, it is highly short-sighted, destructive, and harmful.

Instead, it would be compassionate to equip youth and teens undergoing social and psychological pain with the mental and emotional tools it takes to live in a society that, no matter how hard we try, will never be a utopian paradise of good feelings for everyone at all times. It is far more compassionate to help them learn how to deal with their own feelings of rejection and hatred of the bodies they were born with, feelings that may stem either from within or from feeling rejected by society or friends or even family, for not living up to some current fad of what it means to be a boy or a girl.

How many boys who like music or dance or art simply need to be told it's OK to be a boy and like music and dance and art? How many girls who like sports simply need to be told it's OK to be a girl and like sports? Here in ND, how many girls grew up surrounded by horses and cattle and the rodeo circuit, and maybe were considered tomboys at the time, and as they grew, they were perfectly content knowing that it's OK for girls to like cattle, horses, and rodeo? Should we have encouraged them all to get physically and chemically mutilated? Would that have been compassionate?

No. It is not compassionate for us to allow such irretrievably permanent alterations to children and youth, alterations that go against their very created nature, when what we need to be doing is teaching and training them how to accept themselves, their likes and dislikes, and the bodies they have without bowing to the most recent societal fad. Some societal fads are mostly harmless. Strange haircuts are a mostly harmless societal fad. Chopping off breasts and penises and chemically altering boys and girls is not compassionate, and it is not harmless. It is destructive, and it has already led to intense regret on the part of many people who are now trying to "de-transition." Only they can't ever truly get back to the way they were or could have been, despite them often being told that anything they do is completely changeable if they ever change their mind. It's not.

House Bill 1254 is crucial for the protection of our children and youth in ND. I strongly urge you to render a DO PASS on this bill.

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