

## Testimony in Opposition to LD 1704 / HP 1139

### “An Act to Prohibit a School Administrative Unit from Adopting a Policy That Allows a Student to Use a Restroom Designated for Use by the Opposite Sex”

Submitted to the Judiciary Committee

Chairpersons, Members of the Committee:

I am writing today to strongly oppose **LD 1704**, a bill that would prohibit school districts from adopting policies that allow transgender students to use restrooms consistent with their gender identity.

This legislation, if enacted, would place transgender and nonbinary students in harmful and potentially dangerous situations by forcing them to use restrooms that do not align with their affirmed identity — or worse, compel them to avoid using the restroom at all during the school day.

The impact of denying restroom access aligned with gender identity is not hypothetical. It is real, measurable, and deeply damaging:

- A 2019 study published in the journal *Pediatrics* found that more than **60% of transgender students avoided using school restrooms altogether** because of fear, harassment, or discomfort.
- Prolonged avoidance of restroom use has been linked to **dehydration, urinary tract infections, stomach issues, and other serious health problems**.
- Students who are denied affirming restroom access also report **higher rates of anxiety, depression, and absenteeism**.

Schools should be places where all students feel safe, included, and respected — not where they are forced to choose between their dignity and their health. Denying transgender students access to restrooms that match their identity is not about privacy or safety. It is about **exclusion and harm**.

The idea that inclusive restroom policies endanger others is not supported by evidence. There is **no credible data** showing that allowing transgender students to use restrooms that align with their identity increases risks to anyone. In fact, **unisex restrooms** and gender-inclusive facilities have been successfully implemented in schools, businesses, and public institutions across the country — and have caused **no harm** to anyone.

In contrast, the harm caused by bathroom bans is well documented and disproportionately affects one of our most vulnerable student populations.

This bill would also strip local school districts of the ability to respond compassionately and appropriately to the needs of their own students. School boards and administrators, in collaboration with families and educators, are best positioned to create inclusive policies — not the state.

LD 1704 does not protect students. It harms them. It puts transgender and gender-diverse youth at increased risk for both physical and emotional trauma and sends the dangerous message that they are not welcome in their own schools.

I respectfully urge this committee to vote **Ought Not to Pass** on LD 1704 and to stand on the side of student safety, dignity, and inclusion.

Sincerely,  
Dawn McLaughlin