

Testimony in Opposition to LD 1002 / HPO 649

“An Act to Protect Children’s Identification by Requiring Public Schools to Use the Name and Gender on a Child’s Birth Certificate”

Submitted to the Judiciary Committee

Chairpersons, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **strong opposition** to LD 1002, HPO 649.

As someone deeply concerned for the mental health and well-being of our youth, I urge you not to advance this bill. While it may be framed as protecting children’s identification, the consequences of this legislation would have a **devastating impact** on transgender and nonbinary students across our public school system.

This bill would require that students be referred to only by the name and gender listed on their birth certificate — regardless of the student’s lived identity, affirmed name, or gender expression. In effect, this would **mandate the use of “dead names”** and misgendering, institutionalizing harm against transgender students by denying them the most basic form of respect: recognition.

The mental health consequences of this cannot be overstated.

According to data from **The Trevor Project’s 2023 National Survey on LGBTQ+ Youth Mental Health**, transgender and nonbinary youth who reported that **all or most people in their lives respected their pronouns** attempted suicide at **half the rate** of those who did not receive this respect. Use of chosen names and pronouns is not simply a matter of preference — it is a **protective factor** against depression, anxiety, and suicidality.

To misname or misgender a student is to deny their identity. When this is done by a school — a place that should be a source of safety and growth — the message to that student is clear: *you are not seen, you are not accepted, and you do not belong*. No child should have to endure that kind of institutional erasure, especially when transgender youth already face disproportionate rates of bullying, homelessness, and suicide.

Furthermore, this bill places educators in an ethically impossible position — forcing them to choose between complying with the law or supporting their students’ mental and emotional health. It may also lead to conflicts with federal Title IX protections, which are increasingly interpreted to protect against discrimination based on gender identity.

In conclusion, LD 1002 does not protect children — it harms them. It sends a message to transgender and gender-diverse students that their identities are invalid and unworthy of respect. The mental health, safety, and dignity of all students — especially those in marginalized groups — must come before ideology or bureaucracy.

I respectfully urge the committee to vote **Ought Not to Pass** on this harmful bill.

Sincerely,
Dawn McLaughlin