

In regards to the February 25th hearing for HF435, I am submitting this written testimony.

My name is Beth Derenne, and I am one of the organizers of Black & Pink Minneapolis, a prisoner pen pal project for transgender, gender-nonconforming, and LGBTQIA members in Minnesota and other midwestern states. I regularly hear from transgender women in prison on conditions inside prison and how they are surviving. Being a transgender woman in a men's prison can mean being housed in 24/7 protective custody. This means these women are not allowed to work jobs in prison, not allowed to visit the library, and not allowed to be in general population with other prisoners. This results in mental trauma from forced social isolation. The alternative to this, when transgender women are housed in men's prisons in general population, can also be dangerous and traumatic. Transgender women in prison are subject to harassment, abuse, and threats to their safety.

I want to remind this committee that the State settled in *Lusk vs Minnesota Department of Corrections*. This was a court case of one transgender woman and among the claims in the lawsuit was that housing transwomen in prisons that do not match their gender identity is a violation of the Minnesota Human Rights Act and the Minnesota Constitution. In this settlement, the State promised to abide by the WPATH standards of care and their own policies. The WPATH Standards of Care "recommend institutional administrators, health care professionals, and other officials responsible for making housing decisions for residents consider the individual's housing preference, gender identity and expression, and safety considerations rather than solely their anatomy or sex assignment at birth". Additionally, they "recommend institutional personnel establish housing policies that ensure the safety of residents without segregating or isolating these individuals." Ms Lusk's case paved the way so that transgender women could live with other women prisoners in women's facilities.

We already know the harm that comes when the MN DOC forces transgender women to live in men's prisons. I am against this bill moving forward.

Sincerely,
Beth Derenne
Black & Pink Minneapolis