

Hello, my name is Tristan. I am writing today against House File 435.

I want to share my experience as a transgender individual who spent time in the prison system. It's crucial to discuss the challenges faced by transgender people in these environments, where safety and dignity can often be compromised.

When I knew that I would be spending time incarcerated, the very first thing on my mind was my safety as a trans person. My attorney was also concerned and advocated as much as she could to have me housed as safely as possible. I don't feel like there is a one-size-fits-all solution. I do believe that every single person deserves respect. I believe every person deserves to feel safe while being incarcerated and not treated as an afterthought or a "problem" inmate just because the system doesn't know what to do with us or based on the views of certain individuals in charge at the time.

I believe my incarceration could have gone very wrong had I not been treated respectfully by staff at the jail and housed appropriately based on my comfort level. I was able to contribute and rehabilitate effectively knowing that there was a level of safety and respect that I could count on instead of being afraid for my life.

Since my release, I have experienced firsthand how a compassionate and safety-centered approach can significantly enhance rehabilitation and reintegration into society. This compassionate and respectful approach proves that when individuals are treated with dignity, everyone benefits.

I am calling on the committee members to vote against this bill because it imposes a one-size-fits-all mandate that endangers the safety of trans inmates.

Thank-you for your time.

Tristan L. Pautsch

2/24/2025

Bloomington, Minnesota