

TESTIMONY ON HB 1416
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
February 2, 2021
By: Tara Fuhrer, Director Office of Early Learning
701-328-4646
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

Chairman Robin Weisz and Members of the Committee:

My name is Tara Fuhrer, Director of the Office of Early Learning with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here to provide information and speak in favor of HB 1416.

North Dakota continues to be committed to building a high-quality Birth - 5 early care and education system that enables vulnerable children to have a strong foundation for kindergarten. DPI and DHS have long partnered on Birth - 5 related programs which is why DPI is in favor to consolidate the responsibility for early childhood programs and services into one unified agency at the state level. DPI understands and supports the fact this is a reorganization at the state level that has no negative impact on the local programs and services.

North Dakota recognizes the need to unify state systems and is in support of taking action to ensure efficient use of resources. This will resolve the current complex state early care and education Birth - 5 system, resulting in a stronger and more connected state system to serve our ND families through the Department of Human Services.

ND knows this is a critical step to setting a concrete foundation to support the Birth - 5 and the K-12 systems. DPI recognizes behavioral health initiatives are at the forefront of family and school partnerships. The state's goal to be proactive by consolidating early care and education into the Department Human Services promotes a stronger alignment between early care and education and behavioral health services; ultimately impacting school readiness, family partnerships, and the K-12 education system.

Chairman Weisz and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony and I will stand for any questions that you may have.