

# Testimony in Support of SB 2226

## Residential End-of-Life Facilities

### House Human Services Committee

March 9, 2021 • 2:45 p.m. • Pioneer Room

Vern Dosch

*Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee:*

My name is Vern Dosch, and I'm a Bismarck resident. My family and I have had two distinctly different end-of-life care experiences with my mother and father, which have led to my written testimony in support for Senate Bill 2226. This bill would allow the Department of Health to license residential end-of-life facilities in North Dakota.

Eight years ago, my father was nearing the end of his life. When he was released from the hospital, our family had to make the difficult decision to place him in a nursing home. At that time, there weren't many hospice services available in Bismarck. Unfortunately, we were not able to care for him at home. If a residential end-of-life facility had been available, we would have been so grateful to have a homey place for him to receive 24-hour care while we spent quality time with him in his last days.

Fast forward to December 2020. My mother suffered a setback in her health and was hospitalized. We faced the same dilemma we experienced with my father when she was released from the hospital, with an important difference. The hospice services are much more robust in Bismarck now. CHI St. Alexius Health's hospice professionals were able to provide my family with an amazing suite of services and training to allow us to provide care for my mother in her final days.

It was very important to us that we spend as much quality time with mother as possible. Due to COVID-19 visiting restrictions, we did not want to place her in assisted living or a nursing home. We were fortunate that we were able to move her into my brother's home in Bismarck and we could provide her with the 24-hour care. My siblings and our families were able to spend the final five to six days talking with her, recording stories from her life, and saying our goodbyes. It was a beautiful example of the circle of life, but unfortunately not all families have this as an option.

My mother was able to die with dignity and that is a priceless gift to her and our family. The time we spent with her was an amazing conclusion to a life well-lived. In fact, our family shed no tears during her funeral because we had already found closure since she told us she was ready to go. Her funeral was truly a celebration of her life.

Senate Bill 2226 would allow other North Dakota families to experience a peaceful final season of life by permitting residential end-of-life facilities to exist. A patient facing the end of his or her life could choose the hospice provider they prefer, and then receive round the clock care from registered nurses, CNAs and LPNs. Their families would be welcome to visit as often as they want or even move into the facility with their loved one.

Senate Bill 2226 is the missing piece to the end-of-life care puzzle in North Dakota. I feel awful for those who lost loved ones during the pandemic, when visitors were not allowed at hospitals and nursing homes. Although vaccines are now available, we don't know what the future holds. Could we experience another pandemic in the future? SB 2226 would allow families to be at their loved ones' sides in their final days. Please pass SB 2226 for all of the families in North Dakota. It is my sincere hope that everyone in the state has residential end-of-life facilities as an option in the future.