

Testimony
House Bill No. 1117 - Department of Human Services
House Judiciary Committee
Representative Lawrence Klemin, Chairman
January 13, 2021

Chairman Klemin, and members of the House Judiciary Committee, I am Rosalie Etherington, Chief Clinics Officer for the Human Service Centers of the Department of Human Services (Department). I am here on behalf of the Department in opposition of House Bill 1117.

The proposed repeal of section 25-03.1-18.2 of the North Dakota Century Code, Section 11 of this Bill, would eliminate a guardian authority to consent for psychiatric medications. This would be a devastating blow to rapid, effective psychiatric emergency care.

An unfortunate consequence of severe mental illness is the inability to recognize the illness exists, that symptoms are present, and that treatment is necessary. This leads to refusing prescribed medications and, over time, a worsening of symptoms and weakened response to medications. Over time the illness stops responding to medications altogether.

Guardians are best equipped to make treatment decisions for their wards. The current authority allows them to quickly do so, offering the best possible chance for rapid response to medications and reducing symptoms, reducing hospital stays, and reducing the negative effects of illness over time.

This concludes my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.