



North Dakota House of Representatives

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COMMITTEES:

Appropriations
Appropriations - Human Resources Division

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House Bill 1600 Senate Education Committee

Chairman Beard and members of the Senate Education Committee,

I am Representative Emily O'Brien, representing District 42 in Grand Forks. House Bill 1600 creates the establishment of an immigration law clinic.

I have the privilege to serve on the Workforce Development Advisory Council. Our role is to advise the governor and the public concerning the nature and extent of workforce development in the context of North Dakota's economic development needs and how to meet these needs effectively while maximizing the efficient use of available resources and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort. At the end of this paragraph is the link to the report of the North Dakota Workforce Development Council Recommendations from December 2024. I would like to highlight Recommendation #3 which recommends support for opportunities with the Office of Legal Immigration (which is currently in the process of rebranding itself as Office of Global Talent). Link here: <https://www.medialibrary.nd.gov/assetbank-nd/assetfile/143272.pdf>

In January 2025, there were 15,025 open job positions listed on North Dakota Job Service Dashboard - which is an increase of 14.2% compared to December. The reality is there are more than likely around 30,000 available jobs in North Dakota, many of which are not listed on the dashboard - noting that our highest employment sectors are in agriculture, healthcare, and energy.

These industries may utilize foreign-born workers to help address the state's labor shortages. Capitalizing on one of our flagship institutions - the University of North Dakota and the law school. We can provide educational learning opportunities for our law students through training and this immigration law clinic, while filling a need in workforce shortages. But the necessary expertise to help aid in the legal process is scarce. We have less than a handful of immigration attorneys in North Dakota.

About the bill - before you is version 25.1322.03000. This would create and enact a new section to chapter 15-11 of the North Dakota Century Code.

Section 1 - Immigration Law Clinic.

Line 8 - Subsection 1. The university of North Dakota school of law shall employ one full-time staff attorney for the immigration law clinic. The immigration law clinic attorney may not have more than sixty matters open at any one time.

Line 11 - Subsection 2. Legal services may be provided, and legal work may be done remotely, depending on the needs of the client.

Line 13 - Subsection 3. The university of North Dakota law school may charge nominal fees, as needed, to operate the immigration law clinic.

Section 2. Provides the appropriation of \$400,000 to fund the immigration law clinic at the university of North Dakota school of law for the biennium beginning on July 1, 2025, and ending on June 30, 2027.

I will stand for any questions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.