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Dear House Human Services Committee,

I'm here today to testify in support of HB 1205, which would expand North Dakota's Safe Haven laws by introducing Safe Haven Baby Boxes in our communities. These boxes offer a safe and anonymous option for parents in crisis to surrender their infants, ensuring the babies receive immediate care.

Safe Haven laws have proven to be effective. In 2023, the National Safe Haven Alliance reported that 102 infants were safely surrendered across the country. This law has been successful in our state as well and since 2021 four infants have been adopted through our current Safe Haven law.

If the committee is interested in amending the bill to include a physical box location, as was originally written, we would support that change. States like Indiana, Kentucky, and Arkansas each have more than 25 Safe Haven Baby Boxes in place, and 20 states currently have the physical box, while 6 don't have a box but do have laws allowing for the box. Expanding this resource in North Dakota would provide another option for parents.

I respectfully urge the committee to give HB 1205 a "do pass" recommendation to help ensure that every infant in crisis has a chance to be cared for and placed in a loving home. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Bridget Turbide