

HB 1417
Commissioner Jonathan Holth
Senate Judiciary Committee
Senator Diane Larson, Chair
March 19th, 2025 Peace Garden Room

Good morning, Madam Chair Larson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

For the record, my name is Jonathan Holth, Commissioner of Recovery and Re-entry for the State of North Dakota. As you are aware, the Armstrong administration supports the package of three bills that came out of the interim study on reentry. I stand before you to share our support of HB 1417, the second bill included in this comprehensive package, which focuses on community supervision consistency and best practices.

Something that we talk about all the time in my line of work is that the road to recovery and reentry **is not linear**. You heard me say in my testimony on 1425 that I've never met someone who has found meaningful recovery alone. Well, I've also never met anyone in meaningful recovery who has the same journey as someone else. No two treatment paths are the same. You may have heard people say that relapse or setbacks are a part of recovery. I am not one that believes that, however, setbacks and mistakes are possible, especially for people on probation and parole who are navigating a list of conditions while juggling other parts of life. What matters most is what happens after the setback – how do we hold someone accountable while simultaneously setting them on the right path towards success? This is something that North Dakota's judges and Parole Board members are confronted with when deciding to revoke probation or parole after someone has violated a condition but has not committed a new crime. HB 1417 offers guidance on how we can use staggered periods of custody as a sanction for a *technical violation* without imposing the remaining balance of the sentence. While these recommendations are not mandatory, they can offer some consistency in our responses to non-criminal misconduct in a way that is more proportionate to the circumstances of the violation and less exhaustive of our prison and jail resources.

HB 1417 also helps us conserve resources and focus more on reentry and recovery by eliminating certain criminal justice fees that are not impacting state or local revenue in a meaningful way or helping people get back on their feet. The reentry experts who participated in the interim study have identified that our state is not benefitting from the \$55 community supervision fee that DOCR imposes, nor from the reimbursement or application fees that our court system can impose on people who are indigent. There are better ways to hold people accountable, and I am confident that HB 1417 will allow our officers to spend more time coaching the people on their caseloads to help them change their behaviors instead of playing the role of a debt collector. In this vein, the legislation also includes a study to evaluate criminal fees on a broader level to help the state identify where we are not getting a return on our investment.

HB 1417 demonstrates smart, responsible policymaking, and like HB 1425, it has been vetted by people who have worked in the spaces of reentry and recovery in North Dakota for many years.

Our administration urges the committee to support a “do pass” recommendation on HB 1417. Thank you for your time and I will stand for questions.