



NORTH DAKOTA SENATE

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COMMITTEES:

Education
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SB 2303 Testimony

Senate Human Committee

Sakakawea Room 2/09/21 @ 9:30 am

Chairwoman Lee members of the Senate Human Services Committee for the record my name is Richard Marcellais Senator from Rolette County District 9.

I come before you with a constituent request. I electronically submitted my testimony yesterday, but have made changes and respectfully ask that you refer to my verbal testimony today, and the written copy I just shared with you.

Under current North Dakota Century Code 23-35-02.1 Tribal Nations residing in North Dakota may establish a tribal public health unit “the external boundaries of which border more than four counties.” This law was established specifically for one of the five tribal nations in North Dakota, excluding the other four from the opportunity. Since this law was enacted that tribal nation has chosen not to establish a public health unit, has that option. The intent of SB 2303 is to honor tribal sovereignty and provide all nations residing North Dakota with the same opportunity, by removing the requirement that the external tribal boundaries border more than four counties.

This bill also changes the requirement that the tribal public health unit shall collaborate. No currently existing public health units in the state are required to collaborate with another public health unit.

Changing the language from shall to may provides collaboration without a government forced mandate.

You have likely received and read opposing testimony regarding the fear of potential financial impact the passage of this bill could have on non-tribal public health units. There are currently not tribal nations in North Dakota I am aware of, who are planning to establish a public health unit in the immediate future.

The process to do so would require a considerable amount of time, planning, workforce development, collaboration and negotiation, which would take several years to accomplish. There is no way to know what exact financial impact to non-tribal public health units would be today.

*SB 2303 is not an implication that tribal members have received poor or rationed public health services from currently existing services. It is about **all** tribal nations in North Dakota having the opportunity to establish a public health unit if they choose to.*

Chairwomen Lee members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I urge Do Pass on Senate Bill 2303. I stand for questions.