

## **SB 2311**

### **Human Services Committee**

#### **Testimony of Madeline N. Snell**

**January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Mrs. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I would like to testify today in support of the addition of subsection 2 to section 1 of SB 2311, which would require Health and Wellness curricula to incorporate the addition of mental health awareness and suicide prevention education for students in grades 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>. I feel it necessary only in passing to emphasize how prevalent the issue of mental health illness and suicidal ideation is in our youth today, as I am sure that each of you are well acquainted or at least aware of the weight of the struggles that present themselves to our youth. Although I am originally from rural Montana, in my exposure to North Dakota and to the experience of those who have grown up in North Dakota, I feel the same need for required basic education and training on mental health awareness and suicide prevention education. Through early basic education, it is possible that we can decrease the stigma that surrounds mental health and encourage students to reach out for help not only for themselves but also for others.

I remember the first time, in high school, that I took a short educational course that focused specifically on the topics of suicide prevention and identifying the signs. I was largely impacted, and through the years, now that I am in college, majoring in Social Work, I am still thankful for my exposure to that valuable knowledge, which I now hear the importance of constantly in my classes. As a high schooler, that course not only heightened my awareness but also gave me tools to engage in those difficult discussions with my friends and help them reach out to professional help. Now that I am planning on entering the field of Social Work, I know that it is imperative for children to receive this kind of training as a part of their curriculum, and truly believe that as this addition would help decrease the stigma of mental health and mental health services, it would also increase the awareness for struggling individuals

who might fall through the cracks. I thank you all for your time and devotion to the community and state, and I urge you “do pass” this bill.