

March 8, 2021

Dear Chairman Klein and Members of the Senate Industry, Business, and Labor Committee:

I write today on behalf of the ACLU of North Dakota, which strongly supports House Bill 1441, a bill that would provide for a legislative management study regarding a paid family medical leave program in the state. We urge a **do pass** recommendation on this bill.

North Dakotans work hard. They, like many Americans, put in more hours on the job than workers in other industrialized countries and use fewer vacation and personal days. This is the norm across the United States. However, when workers are faced with the unexpected illness of a family member or require time off to care for a newborn they are often left with the choice between two bad options: keep working and receive a paycheck, or provide essential care to an infant or ill loved one.

HB 1441 provides for a study to assess a potential third option — the creation of a paid family leave program that could be a win for them as a worker and for the business that employs them. It is important to study this critical issue and begin to find ways to will help families and businesses alike get through a serious health event or the birth of a child without having to leave their job or lose their employees.

Another compelling reason to study this potential is that we know that the most vulnerable workers are low-income earners and hourly workers who are overwhelmingly women and disproportionately people of color. Additionally, more than 63 percent of children in the United States are living in a family in which both parents work. At the same time, the number of children living with a single parent is increasing. Elder care is a growing responsibility of American workers, no matter the demands of their job.

Beyond the benefits for the people of this state, a paid family leave study will make clear opportunities to strengthen the business community in North Dakota. A sensible paid family leave program will help North Dakota businesses recruit and keep talented and hard-working employees. Interestingly, recent research data shows that providing workers with paid leave has positive effects on long-term productivity, including improvements in employee motivation, recruitment, and retention.

We respectfully urge you to vote **do pass** on HB 1441 for working families across this state.

Sincerely,



Libby Skarin
Campaigns Director
ACLU of North Dakota
northdakota@aclu.org



P.O. Box 1190
Fargo, ND 58107
aclund.org