



**Testimony**  
**SB 2323**  
**Political Subdivisions Committee**  
**February 11, 2021**

Chair Burckhard, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee,

My name is Katie Christensen and I am the State Director of External Affairs for Planned Parenthood North Central States. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to SB 2323.

Planned Parenthood North Central States provides health services, advocacy, and education including expert reproductive health care for more than 100,000 patients each year across our five-state region. 60% of patients at our Moorhead clinic are residents of North Dakota. We have tens of thousands of activists and supporters throughout the state including interns located at major college campuses in the state. Our education team reaches more than 500 people each year through programming, trainings, and community presentations. Planned Parenthood is here to ensure all people have the information and the means to make free and responsible decisions about whether and when to have children, and our mission affirms human rights to reproductive health care and freedom.

SB 2323 is an unconstitutional and callous attempt to banish abortion providers and their patients from our communities. Access to abortion care is protected as a fundamental right under the United States Constitution and is supported by an overwhelming majority of Americans, including North Dakotans who soundly rejected a ballot measure that would have banned abortion in 2014. This is yet another bill in the broader effort to end abortion in North Dakota.

Current North Dakota law requires abortion providers to have admitting privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of the clinic, N.D. CENT. CODE § 14-02.1-04. And now lawmakers are aiming to impose an additional arbitrary restriction: a 30-mile barrier on where a clinic can be located. North Dakota does not impose extreme geographic restrictions on other similar services, like hospitals or urgent care centers. Nor does North Dakota impose this kind of school-based distance restriction on businesses that pose actual threats to young people in our communities like gun shops or liquor stores.

In 2016, Alabama passed a less extreme version of this bill, and it was swiftly struck down by a federal court.<sup>1</sup> In that case, the state could not show any evidence that students or their families expressed any concerns about the proximity of an abortion clinic to a school that was within only 2,000 feet. Yet, the proponents of this bill seem to believe that parents and students will be harmed by a clinic that is **thirty miles away**. The court noted that “Multiple studies have concluded that longer travel distances to access an abortion provider correlate with fewer women obtaining abortions... [and] The Supreme Court has also recognized that longer travel distances, when taken together with other burdens, increase the burdens on women seeking an abortion.” This distance does nothing to protect schools, but it will exacerbate harms to the people of North Dakota.

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<sup>1</sup> *West Ala. Women’s Ctr. v. Miller*, 299 F. Supp. 3d 1244 (2017).



There is no rational justification for this bill—it is nothing more than anti-abortion legislators shaming and stigmatizing abortion providers and patients and seeking to put abortion care out of reach for the women who choose to access this safe, legal health care service.

The Planned Parenthood Action Fund strongly urges a Do Not Pass recommendation on SB 2323. At a time when resources are precious, our state legislators should be spending their time on policies that help generate resources—not wasting our time and money on harmful, unconstitutional bills.

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