

Chairman Burckhard and members of the Senate Political Subdivisions Committee,

My name is Sierra Heitkamp, Executive Director of North Dakota Right to Life. At North Dakota Right to Life, we have been dedicated to defending life from conception to natural death for over 50 years. With over 2,000 members, our statewide organization focuses on change through legislation and educational programming. As the oldest, pro-life organization in the state, we believe it is our duty to stand up for life at all stages.

I am here today in support of Senate Bill 2323. Our vision at the North Dakota Right to Life Association is that vulnerable persons in our society are protected throughout the span of their lives from fertilization to natural death. Part of our mission is to end unnecessary abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia; ultimately reinforcing societal norms to respect human life.

Having an abortion facility in any size community can bring a certain level of risk or danger. Fargo Police receive numerous calls a year in regard to incidents that occur at the Red River Women's Clinic. I myself have been a part of sidewalk advocacy that has turned violent with a member from our group being physically attacked during our counseling time. I am not alluding to the fact that there is a "side" to the life argument that tends to become more violent; tensions and passions are high on both sides of the issue.

Many of our students travel multiple miles to get to class. That is why NDRL agrees with a multiple mile requirement instead of something similar to a 2,000-foot requirement to protect our rural students. Growing up, I spent many weeknights with my grandfather in Wahpeton, ND, and would drive 27 miles one way to attend school. This is just an example but think of the thousands of students from across our state who have the similar experience of traveling more than a few miles to get to class.

Since our organization's focus is on protecting our vulnerable populations, we believe this bill creates protections for one of our most mentally malleable groups, our children.

Please vote for a DO PASS recommendation on SB 2323.

I will now stand for any questions.

Sierra Heitkamp – Executive Director
North Dakota Right to Life