

SB 2034 – TESTIMONY
House Education Committee
Senator Kathy Hogan
March 14, 2023

Chairman Heinert and Members of the House Education Committee, my name is Kathy Hogan and I represent District 21 in Fargo.

During the 2021-22 Interim, Joan Heckaman served as Chair of the Children's Cabinet. Because I am replacing her position and I worked closely for the establishment of the Cabinet, I am introducing this bill. Michelle Strinden, the current Chair of the Children's Cabinet is here also.

The Cabinet was established in the 2019 session to assess, guide, and coordinate the care for children across the state branches of government and tribal nations. You can see the duties of the Cabinet as listed on page 2, lines 15-29 and page 3 lines 1-7.

While these are all encompassing, the Cabinet provides a connection between the providers, families, and state agencies to look for gaps, current services available, and provide recommendations to improve services. The Cabinet brought forth several recommendations including support for a data base to provide necessary information for program development and funding, an all-encompassing list of recommendations for foster care, recommendations to close

gaps in mental and behavioral services for children, how to address overrepresentation of children in services from tribal country, addressing workforce/staffing needs, adjustments to the delivery of services for the court system, changes to the juvenile justice system including moving children in need of services to the zones, and a final discussion on modeling the Cabinet through information from the Aspen Institute.

Attached is a copy of the report that was given to the Interim Human Service Committee at our last meeting so you can see the breath and depth of information that this group has been working with over the last year.

Membership previously consisted of 12 individuals--some specific to positions and others selected because of their connections with children's programming across the state. Here is the previous membership:

1. Governor/designee
2. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court/designee
3. Speaker of the House/designee
4. President Pro Tempore of the Senate/designee
5. Superintendent of Public Instruction/designee
6. Director of Protection and Advocacy/designee
7. Representation from tribal nations

8. Four individuals representing parents, private providers, or community interests.
9. Chairman of the Cabinet (legislator) appointed by the Chairman of Legislative Management

As the Cabinet worked in monthly meetings, it became evident that there was no specific individual responsible for representing the Department of Health and Human Services, which is the main connection for children's services. We also found that starting December 1, 2022, all legislators serving on the Cabinet would be leaving. The legislators represent 25% of the membership and they provide an important connection with the legislature concerning recommendations coming from the Cabinet.

There were also no reporting requirements for the Cabinet to provide any summary of their work. Attached is a copy of the report provided to the Interim Human Services Committee and an in-person presentation to Governor Burgum. Since the Cabinet has no authority to bring bills forward, the Human Services Committee willingly took this upon their authority and you have SB 2034 before you this afternoon for your consideration.

Senate bill 2034 did three things:

1. It changes the membership from the legislature to include 2 members from the House and 2 members from the Senate from opposite numbered districts to serve 2-year terms on the Cabinet. This will increase membership to 14 and also ensure continuity (Page 1, lines 1220).
2. It adds the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services or their designee as a member of the Cabinet (page 1, line 14). This then increases the membership to 15.
3. It establishes that one of the legislative appointments should be named the Chair of the Cabinet who is appointed by the Chair of Legislative Management. The current bill draft has the Vice Chair of the Cabinet to be from the opposite Chamber with the be named Vice Chair.
4. It provides for an annual report from the Cabinet to Legislative Management and the Governor regarding the activities and findings of the Cabinet (page 3, lines 4-5).

The new Cabinet held its first meeting and at that time, the new cabinet suggested that perhaps the Vice Chair should not be required to be a legislator but rather a representative from other areas elected by the Cabinet.

We would like to add an emergency clause so the Cabinet can begin.

I am willing to try to answer any questions.