North Dakota Women's Network

Kayla Schmidt – Interim Executive Director, North Dakota Women's Network
Opposition - SB 2150
North Dakota House Human Services Committee

March 14, 2023

Chair Weisz and members of the Committee,

My name is Kayla Schmidt and I am the Interim Executive Director of the North Dakota Women's Network. We are a statewide organization working towards improving the lives of women across North Dakota. I am providing testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 2150.

Our mission includes empowering women to take an informed role in their health care decisions. Every woman, like every pregnancy is different. SB2150 has been promoted as a simplification of North Dakota's abortion laws; however, this bill is an oversimplification of complex issues that will ultimately harm patients and doctors who must consider the many complications that may arise during a pregnancy.

While the topic of abortion is often framed as a moral or legal binary argument, the results of a 2022 PEW Research Center survey has found that the majority of Americans do *not* have an absolutist view on abortion regulations. Nuance and individual circumstances are key. The report found that 53% of Americans believe abortion should be legal if the baby is likely to be born with severe disabilities or health problems with another 25% of respondents indicating their decision would depend on the situation.

During testimony for SB2150 before the Senate Judiciary committee, several medical care providers requested changes to the bill's language which limits a healthcare professional's ability to provide care for patients who face difficult, personal decisions about their pregnancy. Several doctors requested an amendment to allow abortion in the case of lethal fetal anomalies. This amendment was not added.

Dr. Collette Lessard stated, "[t]hese diagnoses bring forth unimaginable pain and devastation to families. They are unexpected and not often known about until 20 weeks, at the standard time of an anatomy scan…These are heartbreaking and painful decisions for families. They should be able to receive this compassionate care in state with their OBGYN physician and their families." When asking for consideration for language regarding lethal fetal anomalies, Dr. Brendan Boe said, "[e]nd of life decisions are made every day in this state. These are impossible and heartwrenching decisions that families sometimes have to make, and I ask that you consider allowing them to make those decisions prior to advanced gestation."

This testimony demonstrated the experience and expertise of a doctor should not be overshadowed by limited definitions that restrict their ability to treat patients. North Dakotans deserve to receive medical care that is not hindered by interference from the government.

North Dakotans deserve healthcare that preserves their personal liberty, dignity, and privacy and laws that grant latitude for decisions best left to individuals and their families. We ask for a Do Not Pass recommendation on SB2150.

Thank you.

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