

## Chairman Jay Elkin and Members of the Senate Education Committee –

My name is Sierra Heitkamp and I am the Legislative Director for North Dakota Right to Life. I am testifying today to represent the interests of our 3700 members across the state of North Dakota.

Since the overturn of Roe V. Wade on June 24, 2022, there have been many questions regarding what this means for the direction of our organization. At North Dakota Right to Life, we questioned ourselves as to how our vision and goals may have to evolve moving forward to adequately protect those most vulnerable from conception to natural death. After many conversations, the answer became clear – not only will we continue our work in protecting life at all stages, but we also want to back legislation that educates our citizens and encourages life. A woman or family who finds themselves with an unexpected pregnancy should never feel that abortion is their only option to achieve a successful, happy life.

North Dakota Right to Life and its members support HB 1265 as we would like to see education on human development as to humanize the child that has been conceived. We often hear the argument that “it is just a clump of cells” or “the fetus isn’t a human, separate from its mother, until carried to term and delivered.” This is misinformation and due to the advancement of science and technology, we know that this is far from the truth. It is also important for us to note that this bill does not change the curriculum being taught in our public schools, but instead changes the North Dakota Life Science and Health Education Standards.

I myself first became involved in this pro-life fight in junior high. The Teens for Life chapter in Hankinson, ND was having their monthly meeting and I decided to attend to experience what a group like this did in educating our youth. Throughout the years I was involved, I heard from a girl not much older than me who had an unexpected pregnancy. She bravely explained her experience so that the other members may be able to understand that abortion was not the only option for her. We also watched human development videos during another meeting which was truly eye opening to me as a child in understanding that this is in fact not a “sack of cells,” but a human life in critical need of protection and love. The experiences from participating in these educational events truly shaped me into the advocate I am today and fuels my passion in protecting those most vulnerable from conception to natural death.

I ask this committee today for a **Do Pass recommendation on HB 1265** in order to positively encourage the education of our youth on the important lesson of human development in the womb.

Thank you for your time today and I am available by phone or email to answer any questions you may have.



Sincerely,

*Sierra M Heitkamp*

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**NDRL Legislative Director**