

January 4, 2023

North Dakota Senate Human Services Committee

Madame Chairman Lee and Committee Members,

My name is Tim Mathern. I serve on the Senate Appropriations Committee. I am also a social worker.

I began my career in 1972 as a social worker working with young women experiencing unplanned pregnancies. I recall the tears shed when the pregnancy was confirmed and the following challenges of telling the parents of the expectant mother and the new expectant father. The questions to be addressed included Often agonizing decisions about adoption, abortion, or being a single parent. At that time most young women were also expelled from high school.

Often our discussions would revolve around the fact that pregnancy took some time, allowing us to address the many issues involved. A major issue was that of health care costs. A challenge often was not only the amount but also the responsible person for these expenses. The passage of this bill gives women resources reducing pressure from other people on how to proceed.

This bill directs the Department of Health and Human Services to seek the necessary approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to expand medical assistance coverage for pregnant women with income below two hundred percent of the federal poverty level. This would cover more persons than we presently cover.

Though I believe it is in society's best interest that we provide health care coverage for all women for pregnancy we have not yet arrived at that public policy. This is an important step to address this policy. I also believe particularly since the recent US Supreme Court decision directing abortion policy to the states, passage of this bill would help women and families make a decision supporting an ongoing pregnancy.

I also understand that in addition to the appropriation, NDDHHS needs resources of staff to implement the increased funding. No doubt the department will share these costs with you.

I ask you for a Do Pass recommendation on this bill and referral to the Appropriations Committee.

Thank you.

Tim Mathern, MSW