

Testimony
Senate Bill 2081
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Judy Lee, Chairman
January 10, 2023

Chairman Lee, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Cory Pedersen, Director of the Children and Family Services Section with the Department of Health and Human Services (Department). I appear before you to support Bill 2081, which was introduced at the request of the Department.

The bill proposes to remove the current North Dakota Century Code requirement for licensure of “maternity homes” by the Department.

Section 1. The proposed changes outlined in this section replaces “the licensed maternity medical hospital or home” in section 23-41-04 of the North Dakota Century Code with “the medical hospital” and replaces “maternity hospital” with “medical hospital” when referencing requirements related to “birth report of child with special health care needs”.

Section 2. The changes proposed to section 50-06-05.1 of the North Dakota Century Code on page 2, line 26; page 3, line 5; page 8, line 2; and page 8, line 11 is to remove licensing of maternity hospitals from the powers and duties from the Department.

Section 3. On page 11, line 31, the Department proposes to repeal chapter 50-19 of the North Dakota Century Code, Maternity Homes. This repeal of language would remove reference to “maternity homes” as a regulated facility as maternity homes are specific to the housing of a mother in need of a safe housing and programming, but not to medically birth the infants.

Historically, the Department through its Children and Family Services section has completed onsite licensing of two provider agencies in North Dakota. Maternity homes work closely with various service providers to meet

the needs of the mother and child prior to and after birth including economic assistance, medical services, safe housing supports and in certain circumstances a referral to licensed adoption agency. Maternity homes operate much like an abused adult resource center or domestic violence shelter; neither which require a license from the Department to operate and serve the public.

In evaluating the law, the Department would propose a repeal of the law, given the model is not specific to serving children in child welfare, but rather has supported adult women needing a safe place to live prior to delivery of their infant or for a short period of time after the delivery of the infant.

The changes to this section would offer an efficiency for the Department and the two vendors, St. Gianna's in Warsaw and Perry Center in Fargo, both of which are in support of removing the regulation to operate with a license. Neither vendor receives any Department funding to operate and removing the requirement to be licensed will not disrupt service delivery as the programs could continue to support and serve clients ongoing.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.