

North Dakota Women's Network

**Kayla Schmidt – Interim Executive Director, North Dakota Women's Network
Opposition – SB 2129
North Dakota Senate Judiciary Committee**

January 23, 2023

Chair Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary 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 with the support of our members and advocates. I am providing testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 2129.

Our mission includes empowering women to take an informed role in their health care decisions. We rely on medical experts to guide us in making these personal choices.

Any program that involves medical services should be maintained by entities that specialize in those areas. SB 2129 allows for "medical services" to be included in the definition of "support services." Whereas religious organizations may offer moral and spiritual support, and often acts as a connection to community support networks, they may lack the professional healthcare training; best practices policies; and ability to record, analyze, and report data that demonstrates the program is operated effectively and without harm to those it serves.

This bill also removes language requiring program services to be "outcome based with positive outcome based results." Nongovernmental organizations receiving a funding appropriation should be held accountable to record and report such outcomes.

Furthermore, SB 2129 is ambiguous regarding auditing requirements, stating, "**I**f a religious organization segregates funds received from the alternatives-to-abortion program into a separate account then only the account in which funds were deposited may be subject to an audit by the state." Once again, accountability is key. Any nongovernmental entity involved in a program that is charged with making use of government funds should adhere to defined regulations about how funds must be tracked and understand that any entity receiving state funding is subject to a state audit.

North Dakotans expect fiscal responsibility from our government and government-funded programs. As of now, SB2129 removes language that would ensure outcome based results, leaves room for interpretation about tracking finances, and does not ensure that women seeking informed care are guaranteed to attain it through the program's new definitions. We ask that SB 2129 receives a "Do Not Pass" recommendation from this committee.

Thank you.

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