

## Senate Human Services Committee-SB 2159

February 7, 2023

Madam Chair Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

I am Joan Heckaman from Dickinson ND and I am here to provide some information at the request of Senator Lee for SB 2159.

I was present before this committee January 4, 2023 when you heard one of your first bills of the session, SB 2034.

The bill before you today, SB 2159, addresses much of the similar content in SB 2034. Both bills are more descriptive in their manner in which legislators are selected for membership in the Children's Cabinet.

This bill removes the specifics for the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore to serve on the Cabinet. These two individuals are replaced by one House member and one Senate member, one of whom serves on the education standing committee and one who serves on the human services standing committee. While this may actually help the situation in which all 3 of the legislators who had served on the Cabinet left on December 1, 2022. It may also not address the situation in which the connection between the legislative members and the upcoming legislative session is lost. That happened after the 2022 election and the end of the President Pro Tempore's term. While a new Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate were selected, those 2 individuals may not have any connection to the past work of the Cabinet. That is what is missing right now. While there are legislators who will serve because of their positions as Speaker and President Pro Tempore and a legislator has been appointed to serve as chairperson of the Cabinet, all three are new and have not had any involvement in the past 2 years work of the Cabinet.

To address this issue SB 2034 was drafted by the Interim Human Services Committee. That bill passed the Senate and is now in the House for their consideration. SB 2034 also added the director of DHHS or designee and also added a reporting requirement so important for accountability of the work of the Cabinet.

I would invite you, committee, to review SB 2034 and then look at this bill, SB 2159, to see if you can merge them and possibly eliminate one. I am not opposed to the election of legislators by committee as in this bill, but 2034 has the provision that one legislator be from an even numbered district and one from an odd numbered district. That would ensure that one of the members would still serve on the Cabinet until possibly their next election or given the new law, complete their 8 years in the legislature.

Thank you for your time, and I will leave this in your capable hands.

Joan Heckaman

Past Chair of the Children's Cabinet

[Joanheck23@hotmail.com](mailto:Joanheck23@hotmail.com)

701-302-0355