

## Chairwoman Judy Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services 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 women and families who find themselves in unplanned pregnancies in North Dakota. 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, encourages life, and provides aid to those who qualify. 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.

After discussing SB 2181 with our members and other partners in the pro-life committee, we believe that this is a wonderful step in the right direction for mothers and families in our state. Our goal this year is to work on promoting legislation that helps solidify North Dakota as not only a pro-life state, but a PRO-FAMILY state. This legislation, if passed, would extend benefits for pregnant women in our state in order to ensure they receive the care they need. These benefits “...*must be for the duration of the pregnancy and the postpartum period consisting of the twelve-month period beginning on the last day of the pregnancy,*” as the bill states.

I ask this committee today for a **Do Pass recommendation on SB 2181** in order to uplift and support pregnant women in North Dakota as we continue to promote and encourage life at all stages.

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