

January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023

From: Gabriela Balf, MD, MPH

**Re: In Support of SB 2345**

Madam Chair Lee, esteemed Committee Members,

My name is Gabriela Balf, I am a psychiatrist in Bismarck and ND Psychiatric Society member, and I testify on my behalf.

It was my honor to work on the Guardianship Task Force on the team lead by Judge Cynthia Feland and others and I am pleased to see that the efforts have led to the writing on these bills.

I have seen the most vulnerable members of our society protected by responsible people, who work alongside the medical team for the improvement of our patients. They are knowledgeable of the medical and psychiatric inpatient workflows, of the criteria for admission inpatient and at the State Hospital, they respond promptly when the emergency room and the inpatient team calls them with updates and, overall, caring for these patients who cannot make decisions on their own behalf due to the severe nature of their illness goes smoothly, no different from how it goes for patients with caring family members.

And, rarely, I have seen guardians who are not familiar with the processes described above, and sometimes not even with the patients themselves, who leave the hospital team hanging for days, unable to advance the care of the patient, subjecting the patient and the hospital to unnecessary stay and costs and, frankly, deprivation of the freedom of the patient. Besides frustration and costs, besides anguish for someone who already is disadvantaged, we physicians cannot do anything rapidly to advocate for our patient.

I salute this bill, the goal of which is to educate and monitor the guardianship system.

I urge you to give a **DO PASS** recommendation for the **SB 2345**.

Thank you for your time and I stand for questions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Balf" followed by a stylized arrow pointing to the right.

Gabriela Balf

Clin Assoc Prof UND Psychiatry and Behavioral Science

