
Good afternoon, Chairwoman Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. My name is Kim Mertz, Healthy and Safe Communities Section Director within the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (Department), Division of Public Health. I am here to provide information on Senate Bill 2185 regarding what the Department has already done relating to pregnancy and parenting resources being available on a website.

As part of North Dakota Century Code, Chapter 14-02.1, Abortion Control Act, Section 14-02.1-02.1, Printed information, Health and Human Services is required to provide "Geographically indexed materials designed to inform the woman of public and private agencies and services available to assist a woman through pregnancy, upon childbirth, and while the child is dependent, including adoption agencies. The materials must include a comprehensive list of agencies available, a description of the services they offer and a description of the manner, including telephone numbers, in which they might be contacted...."

To assure materials are kept up to date in a timely manner and to expand reach, the Department identified the need to transition from printed materials to an online resource directory. As a result, the Department contracted with FirstLink 2-1-1 in August 2020 to include the required information cited above into their Directory of Community Resources website: <https://myfirstlink.org/>. FirstLink promotes the website and resources through monthly website banners, social media posts and distribution of media materials.

Instead of developing a new site, as the current language proposes, we would suggest using the appropriation to enhance the existing FirstLink site. The use of the current website might save taxpayers' dollars. If this Bill passes in its current form, the appropriation of \$100,000 is more than likely not sufficient and the time frame of completion by August 1, 2023, is not achievable. The Department would be required to procure a new contract with an entity to

develop a new website, the entity would need time to do the work of developing the new website and the Department would need to secure advertising on billboards within a few months. We believe more time and resources would be needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.