

Testimony on Senate Bill 2302

Good morning Madam Chair Senator Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. My name is Terry Wanzek, State Senator representing District 29 in ND. I'm here today to introduce SB 2302 to your committee. It is a simple, concise, self-explanatory bill, and only one page long. It simply states that no one can discriminate, at any point in an organ transplant process, against a recipient of an organ transplant based solely on a mental or physical disability that they may have. I am not aware that this is an issue in our state or that there are cases where this happens. But I am aware of the fact, that all our surrounding states have similar language protecting against discrimination in an anatomical gift situation. Matter of fact this language is almost identical to SD's language. We are taking a proactive approach with this bill, in clarifying that our law, will not allow this type of discrimination.

Now, I have a special person to introduce to you. I'd like you to meet my sister Gail, who has Down syndrome. Gail is the baby in our family. She has been a family member for 52 years. She came to us when she was 9 months old, from Grafton, when Judge Van Sickle ordered the Grafton state school to find families for their population. She has been with us ever since, growing up on the farm.

I cannot express it enough; how much love Gail has given to our family. Gail is a highly valued person in our family. Of all my 5 siblings, Gail is the one who never forgets birthdays, anniversaries, her niece and nephews' birthdays and other special events. She taught us about her disability, she opened our eyes, and helped us understand the struggles with living a life with disability. She has shown us that she is a person, with feelings and love for others. She has also shown our family that people like her have value and purpose in life, when given opportunities and loved. We, my parents, siblings and spouses, nieces and nephews, treat her no differently than any of the other family members. Today Gail lives on her own in an apartment in Jamestown, with family nearby, and is employed at UJ.