

Chair Roers and members and of the Senate State and Local Government Committee, my name is Patrick Bertagnolli, and I am the Executive Director for Job Service North Dakota. I am submitting testimony in opposition of HB 1285.

Job Service believes that this bill will create significant additional work to both the agency and to members of the legislative body, without providing any positive outcomes. HB 1285 does not change the process for passing a bill. Bills that are introduced, whether from an agency or from another source must stand on their own merits and follow the same process. Agencies provide testimony, interested parties provide supporting and opposition testimony, and legislators ask questions necessary to deliberate the value of each bill to North Dakota. There is not a short cut for passing a bill. Importantly, agency bills do not get an automatic pass by having the ability to introduce bills.

The ability to submit bills and the time it allows agencies to continually refine the content for submission is extremely important to us. We feel that the changes proposed in HB 1285 create hurdles that ultimately could prevent good legislation from being heard by the legislative body as a whole. For example, Job Service has an Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council made up of members of the employer community, labor community, and legislative community. Given this arrangement, it would seem logical that we would attempt to utilize our legislative members as our bill sponsors. However, there are times when an individual legislative member may not be in agreement with the direction of the majority of the Advisory Council and subsequently not feel comfortable sponsoring a particular bill, causing us to search out another legislative sponsor. As the search occurs, we expect that there could be reluctance in sponsoring a bill that the legislative representative of the Advisory Council will not sponsor. This could result in good or even required legislation never being heard.

Although it is new to all of us, we are also concerned with the complexities this format will provide given term limits. The timing of elections, along with the consistent change in the makeup of the legislative body will provide a much more challenging environment in identifying and educating a legislative sponsor.

Job Service does not take the legislative process lightly, and we are very selective in submitting bills. We have worked to build the trust of the legislative body and to not abuse the privileges provided to us. It is difficult to imagine all of the unintended consequences of this legislation, but we truly believe that the proposed bill will add additional work and duties to an already over-worked legislative assembly and to the agencies supporting the citizens of the state.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony and would be happy to discuss with any of you the impacts and potential problems HB 1285 raises. Thank you for your time.