Testimony on SB 2406
Special Ad Hoc Policy Committee
September 1st, 2026

Chairmen Klein and Ruby, and Members of the Joint Policy Committee,

My name is Madison Hanson. I serve on the Board of the National Association of Social Workers- North Dakota Chapter and chair our Advocacy Committee. I am here today in support of SB 2406.

Social work is often understood primarily as one-on-one work with individuals and families. But our profession also works at the macro level, addressing the policies, institutions, and systems that shape people's lives.

Transparency and public participation are social work issues because communities cannot meaningfully participate in decisions affecting their resources, infrastructure, and future without access to the information necessary to understand those decisions.

The issue is not confidentiality itself. Legitimate proprietary and commercially sensitive information can be protected. The concern is contractual secrecy that prevents public officials from sharing basic information with communities while decisions are still being made.

There is also a broader consequence: public trust. Public trust is itself a form of community infrastructure. When people believe significant decisions are being made behind closed doors, the damage can extend beyond one project. It can weaken confidence in government and willingness to participate in the next decision.

From a social work perspective, transparency is also prevention. Our work should not begin only after the consequences of decisions are already being felt. Transparent public processes give communities an opportunity to identify concerns early, **before they become problems we are all later asked to solve.**

Economic development and meaningful public participation do not have to be competing interests.

For these reasons, NASW-North Dakota respectfully asks for a do-pass recommendation on SB 2406.

Thank you for your time,

Madison Hanson
Board Member & Advocacy Committee Chair
National Association of Social Workers, North Dakota Chapter