

Senate Bill 2176
Sen. Michelle Axtman
House Education Committee
March 11, 2025

Good morning, Chairman Heinert and members of the House Education Committee. For the record, my name is Michelle Axtman, Senator from District 7. As a member of the Children's Cabinet for two years and a recent appointment as Chair, I am here to provide supportive testimony for Senate Bill 2176.

For some history, the Children's Cabinet was established in 2019 by Senate Bill 2313. The intent of the cabinet is to support cross-agency collaboration and service delivery to improve outcomes for children and families. You will hear later from Forum for Youth Initiative on cabinets across various states and different structures and governance within government. The intent of this bill is to move the Children's Cabinet, which is currently administered within the Department of Health & Human Services, into the Office of the Governor. As you can see, the entire bill is underlined as it will be a new section to chapter 54-07 of North Dakota Century Code.

I am now going to walk through the changes noted in this bill by sections.

Section 1, Subsections 1 and 2: This language makes a few updates to the membership of the cabinet, to include the legislative members and increases the additional members from 4 to 5 to ensure representation from subgroups listed on page 2 lines 5-10.

Section 1, Subsection 2 g.: Clarifies that the commissioner is from the department of health and human services.

Section 1, Subsection 2 i.: Changes department to the governor's office.

Section 1, Subsection 3: Changes "chairman of legislative management" to "the governor, in collaboration with the chairman of legislative management"

Section 1, Subsection 5 a.: Adds "and families"

Section 1, Subsection 5 i.: Adds "Establish and oversee designated working groups to develop policies impacting children and families; and"

Section 1, Subsection 5 j, 1 and 2: Adds in "Other designated working groups on children and family issues"

Section 1, Subsection 6: Changes "department" to "office of the governor", "and coordinate with other designated working groups on children and family issues"

Section 1, Subsection 7 a.: Adds "The presiding officer of the children's cabinet may designate working groups and appoint or remove liaisons to serve on the working groups"

Section 2: This repeals the former section in code that had the children's cabinet in 50-06-43.1.

Section 3: Amendment to remove.

This covers the language changes and would like to now ask Lieutenant Governor Michelle Strinden to provide testimony related to her previous role as chair.