

Testimony Prepared for the
House Human Services Committee

January 13, 2025

By: Desiree Sorenson, Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone Director

RE: HB 1072 Relating to foster care homes for children and adults.

Chair Ruby, and members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Desiree Sorenson. I am the Director for the Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone, which includes the counties of Mountrail and McKenzie. In addition, I serve as Vice-Chair of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. I also served as a member of the Adoption Redesign team. I am here today to provide testimony in Support of House Bill 1072.

As the legal custodian of children in public foster care, there are times when individuals seeking to become a permanency option (such as adoptive parent or legal guardian) need financial assistance in order to establish legal rights of a foster child. This is key so that the child may find a forever home and no longer need to be in foster care.

Guardianship is pursued as an alternative to foster care in circumstances where a family member or other suitable guardian is willing and able to accept responsibility for the care of the child. Guardianship subsidy is reimbursed to families by the use of federal funds; however, state general funds are an allowable option for children who do not meet the federal guardianship eligibility guidelines. The proposed changes reflect current processes for guardianship subsidy that the zone will apply for on behalf of the child and individuals seeking to have guardianship of the child. HB 1072 will provide

critical supports to eliminate existing barriers to timely and appropriately permanency planning for youth in our foster care system.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony regarding House Bill 1072. I stand for questions from the committee.