

Vanessa Deibert
Regarding HB 1205
January 19, 2025

My name is Vanessa Deibert and I am a resident of Mandan, ND as well as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the state of North Dakota.

I am submitting written testimony in support of HB1205 relating to abandonment of infants in newborn safety devices; and to provide an appropriation.

Prior to my work in clinical mental health, I worked in foster care adoption for close to ten years. During my time in adoption, we experienced multiple cases of what is referred to as 'safe haven babies', across the state. I had the opportunity to be the social worker assigned to two of these cases within the Bismarck area. Unfortunately, in one of the cases I was a part of, the parent was questioned by law enforcement and even threatened with criminal charges until Social Services became involved.


Parents who are choosing to utilize a safe haven law are usually in crisis mode to begin with. I cannot imagine how terrifying it was for this parent to think she was choosing a safe option for her child and then being met with questioning. I do not fault law enforcement as I realize this is not a common occurrence for many departments, especially in our rural areas. However, it is clear that additional education as well as newborn safety devices can be beneficial in our state.

I believe many people would like to think that there is not a need for a bill to ensure parents have a safe way to surrender their child; however, there are many circumstances that can lead parents to feeling like they do not have any other choice. By utilizing newborn safety devices, this would create an additional safe and anonymous way for a parent to surrender their child.

Developing protocol for newborn safety devices can decrease child abandonment and give parents an additional option for their child if they do not believe they can care for them adequately. Newborn safety devices save lives and are already being utilized in other states.

Thank you for reading this testimony. Your consideration of this matter and solutions are much appreciated.

Sincerely,



Vanessa Deibert, LCSW