

TESTIMONY OF
LIEUTENANT COLONEL JAY SHELDON
NORTH DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD
BEFORE THE
HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
21 JANUARY 2023
HOUSE BILL 1338

Chair Ruby and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jay Sheldon, administrator of the North Dakota Military Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1338. This legislation represents a step in strengthening the coordination between state child protective services (CPS) and military Family Advocacy Programs (FAP) to ensure the safety and well-being of military families and children.

Federal law requires the Department of Defense (DOD) to request state reports regarding instances of child abuse and neglect involving military family members. House Bill 1338 aligns with this requirement by establishing a process for identifying military status in child abuse and neglect allegations and ensuring pertinent information is shared with the appropriate military authorities.

This legislation is necessary because approximately 70% of military families live off military installations and are an integral part of our communities. Without clear statutory authority, local CPS agencies policies for identifying military families and collaborating with military protective and rehabilitative services may not occur or be delayed.

By requiring CPS to identify military families at the onset of their investigations and share case information with military Family Advocacy Programs, North Dakota can help protect victims, enhance coordination, and complement federal responsibility.

Military families contribute significantly to our communities, often facing unique stresses such as frequent relocations, deployments, and separations. It is our collective responsibility to support these families and ensure that children in military households receive the same level of protection and care as all children in North Dakota.

House Bill 1338 provides an opportunity to solidify a bridge between state and military systems, creating a safety net for military families and helping them access the resources they need. I ask your support for HB 1338.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.