

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michelle Nitengale, and I am a North Dakota resident, military spouse, and educator, speaking in support of HB 1477. This bill is critical in protecting the rights of individuals and families seeking fertility healthcare treatment.

In 2018 I married the love of my life. We dreamed of traveling and building our family. Four months later the pregnancy test read positive and we were over the moon. We made our first appointment for 6 weeks and three days before I ended up in the ER where the staff performed my first ultrasound, not in joy but in fear. That day we grieved loss one. In seven years of marriage, we have grieved eleven such losses. We have cried, screamed, raged, and then driven to Fargo for infertility treatment in a blizzard. We have postponed buying a house to pay for treatment. We have changed our lifestyle, learned how to self-administer injections, and have never given up. Every month we are in the doctor's office trying again but access is limited and the costs sky high. While we are blessed to have Tricare, it does not cover non-coital reproduction so everything is out of pocket, thus impacting our financial security.

As someone personally invested in this issue, I have seen firsthand how access to fertility treatments profoundly impacts families in our community. Infertility is a medical condition that affects approximately one in eight couples and one in four military families. Its physical, emotional, and financial toll can be overwhelming. For many, the hope of building a family depends on having access to affordable and comprehensive fertility care.

Unfortunately, the lack of guaranteed access to fertility treatments leaves many North Dakota families facing impossible decisions—choosing between pursuing treatment or facing insurmountable financial strain. By passing HB 1477, you will ensure that individuals and couples across the state have the legal protection and resources needed to make these deeply personal decisions without fear of discrimination or financial ruin.

This legislation is not just about access to care; it's about equity. As a state, we must prioritize the well-being of all residents by supporting their right to pursue fertility healthcare. It is a matter of fairness and compassion.

In conclusion, I urge you to vote in favor of HB 1477. This bill is a vital step toward ensuring that all North Dakotans have the right to access fertility healthcare and to build the families they dream of. Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to supporting the people of our state.



Michelle Nitengale