

Greetings Chairman Ruby and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Catherine Murphy. I am a twenty-six year old woman raised in North Dakota, graduate with a bachelor's degree in biology from Valley City State University, and friend to many women in their twenties and thirties. Healthcare is a topic we discuss often and in current times fear with the laws in place.

I've had friends miscarry and have stillbirths, friends who chose to terminate, and friends whose baby showers I've joyfully planned. The great sadness and grief of losing a wanted pregnancy is one I wish upon no one, and obstacles in healthcare should never add to the difficulty in making decisions for ones own health. A family should never have to choose between a wife, mother, daughter, or friend coming home alive and grieving the life she was planning with a new baby and not coming home at all due to lack of medical care.

A friend's sister-in-law lost her baby at 34 weeks due to lack of medical care in western North Dakota. The mother developed eclampsia and started losing a large amount of blood. Because of hospital practices, they refused to deliver the baby, and that family almost lost them both. If they had been in a larger hospital or had protection under laws like HB 1488, that young mother and father would have brought their daughter home in a car seat and not a casket.

Choosing to terminate at eighteen years old let another friend successfully go to college, open a business, and purchase a home before 24 years old. While an incredibly difficult decision, it was one she made to create a better and more stable life than what she had growing up. In addition, her family has a history of mental illness that was jumpstarted by the hormonal shifts during pregnancy. She knew that being a single mother at eighteen was the wrong choice for herself for dozens of reasons and every bit of her life nine years later is better for making that decision.

The current legislation around women's healthcare in North Dakota is frankly terrifying. I fear that access to birth control will become even more limited and expensive, the choice of if and when to have children will vanish, and even more young adults will leave North Dakota for states with actual choice in their reproductive care, if trends of the last several years continue. North Dakota needs to be looking towards the future, not living in the past.

Instead of legislation focusing on whether a zygote will become a fetus and be born, what if the focus shifted to the hearts already beating with lungs already breathing of the 1500 plus North Dakota children in foster care and families with kids they can barely afford to feed, clothe, and keep the lights on simultaneously? What if we left healthcare decisions in the hands of medical professionals and their patients? What if we, as North Dakota residents

and lawmakers, implemented a change that shocked the rest of the United States by having the most common-sense reproductive healthcare laws in the country, creating a ripple effect that can change everything for the better? I believe that this bill can do all of those things and so much more for the women and families of North Dakota. I believe this bill is historic and will bring a light to very dark times in women's healthcare. I fully support HB 1488 because it brings me hope, and I think everyone could use more of that these days.

Make this choice for our future, for your daughters and granddaughters, nieces, and friends. Vote in favor of HB 1488.