

Honorable Members of the North Dakota Legislative Assembly,

Hello, my name is Neil Kotzenmacher, and I am a senior at the University of North Dakota majoring in Commercial Aviation and Aviation Management. As a private pilot currently pursuing my commercial rating, I have personally experienced the challenges of navigating the FAA's medical certification process. After being diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder, it took me over a year and a half to secure a special issuance medical certificate. The process was financially burdensome, with repeated visits to aviation medical examiners and extensive testing, and emotionally taxing due to the uncertainty of my career prospects.

This bill is critical to improving access to resources and support for aviation professionals. Mental health challenges are particularly difficult to address in this field due to the stigma and fear of losing medical certification, which can lead pilots to hide their struggles. The North Dakota Center for Aerospace Medicine would provide much-needed assistance with FAA medical certification, access to aviation medical examiners, and outreach focused on mental health.

By passing this bill, we can take a significant step toward protecting the health and careers of aviation professionals while reducing barriers to accessing the resources they need. I urge you to support this essential initiative.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Neil Kotzenmacher