

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, my name is Arik Spencer, President and CEO of the Greater North Dakota Chamber. GNDC is North Dakota's largest statewide business advocacy organization, with membership represented by small and large businesses, local chambers, and trade and industry associations across the state. We stand in **opposition** to House Bill 1584.

In our 2024 ND Economics and Employer Survey of our membership, when asked to name one thing state government could do to help your business, the top answer was to make healthcare more affordable.

HB 1584 seeks to put self-funded health plans organized under the federal Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) law from the definition of "covered entity," subjecting them to state-imposed healthcare mandates, which will increase their healthcare costs.

According to North Dakota health insurers, each biennium, healthcare mandates cost employers in the small and large group pool in excess of \$800,000,000 in increased premiums. Just last fall, the Insurance Commissioner approved small group insurance premium increases between 6.3% and 15.3% for the 2025 plan year. These increases leave employers with hard decisions. Do they continue offering employer-sponsored health insurance or do they provide raises to help employees pay for rent and groceries?

Should the current version of HB 1584 become law, self-funded plans that organize to control their costs would likely be subject to all state-level mandates already imposed on employers in small and large group plans, drastically increasing their costs. It's important to note that there are eight other bills this session proposing mandates that would either be applied to the private sector or require a bill to apply to the private sector in the next session. These costs add up, and they don't go away.

GNDC strongly urges a DO NOT PASS recommendation, and I will be happy to stand for questions.

