

Sen Scott Meyer, D18
Grand Forks, ND

SB 2232

This is a simple bill. A constituent and friend of mine from our days at UND, Dr. Collette Lessard-Anderson, brought this issue to my attention. She practices obstetrics and gynecology in Grand Forks, ND.

In discussions, Dr. Lessard told me that substance use disorder is a medical condition that she has seen in various patient encounters including the provision of pregnancy and postpartum care. Treatment of substance use disorders can be impaired by outdated mandated reporting laws.

Madam Chair, our current state law, mandates that health care professionals with knowledge of any substance or alcohol use in pregnancy are mandated to report that patient to child welfare services.

Failure to report in these cases results in that health care professional being guilty of a class B misdemeanor. This current law assumes that any substance used in pregnancy is directly equivalent to child abuse.

This intent of the bill updates code by combining both controlled substance and alcohol use. The bill further provides for a waiver of

reporting if the woman receives and complies with medical care during the pregnancy.

The bill further amends the code to allow more physician discretion on when to test. As the law currently stands, we are one of only 3 states in the country that REQUIRES compulsory testing of newborns for substance use at any time during pregnancy. The changes in the law from "shall" to "may" still allows pediatricians and practitioners the freedom to screen infants for illicit substances if there are clinical concerns for unexplained symptoms or concerns in providing a safe discharge plans for families while not mandating such testing where it is not needed.

Dr. Lessard will be able to explain the bill further, as she is testifying virtually.