

Dear Senators:

My name is Lisa Michels, I am a resident of Minot, and I am writing in support of SB 2264 relating to the definition of marriage in North Dakota. The state has been issuing marriage licenses to two spouses, whether man/woman, woman/woman, man/man, since 2015. It is high time the language in the NDCC catches up to the practice.

SB 2264 rightfully recognizes that marriage is a civil agreement between two adults, regardless of sex or gender, who choose to commit to and protect each other. My wife and I have been together for over 20 years, and we committed to each other long before we were able to legalize our marriage. We did not need a marriage license to agree to be together. What legal marriage does for us is ensure the same protections and benefits that any other married couple has. We share property and bank accounts and pay expenses together, and we enjoy the benefit of filing taxes jointly as spouses. If the unthinkable happens to either one of us, the other will have financial security as next of kin. Most importantly to me, if my wife faces a medical crisis, I cannot be shut out of her hospital room or out of any decisions that must be made on her behalf, because someone does not recognize the validity of our relationship. Our marriage license ensures that.

My wife and I are not asking for any special privileges under the law; we only want to have the same legal rights and protections that other married couples have. By expanding the definition of marriage to include all "spouses" and "individuals married to each other," SB 2264 provides these protections for us and all married couples. I urge this Senate to support SB 2264.

Lisa Michels