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**To:** Senate Judiciary Committee  
**From:** David Tamisiea, Executive Director  
**Date:** February 4, 2025  
**Re:** SB 2284 — Disclosure of Adoption Proceedings and Birth Records

The North Dakota Catholic Conference opposes Senate Bill 2284 which would require the disclosure of adoption proceedings and birth records.

This is an issue that can generate strong emotional feelings. On one side, we have adult adoptees who understandably wish to know something about their birth parents and genetic heritage. On the other side, we have birth parents who, often for very personal reasons, desired to have a closed adoption and their identity kept confidential. For obvious reasons, their voices are not here to testify on this issue, so it is for us to speak for them.

Catholic Charities North Dakota has been facilitating adoptions in the state since 1923. The Catholic Church has been involved in facilitating adoptions for even longer. Catholic Charities North Dakota is also the repository of adoption records for Lutheran Social Services since they stopped doing adoptions in 2020, and the repository of adoption records for the Village Family Services since they stopped doing adoptions in 2023. The Catholic Church comes at this issue from experience, and our experience tells us that forcing the disclosure of identifying birth records without the birth parents' consent is a bad idea.

Most adoptions today are open. That is the preferred method. There are times, however, when a birth mother wishes - or perhaps needs - confidentiality. It can make a difference as to whether she chooses adoption for her child or abortion. To be frank, so long as abortion is legal, and so long as confidentiality could make the difference between choosing adoption or abortion, our laws should protect those birth records from disclosure.

This is also a matter of honoring the promises made to the birth parents during the adoption process. In a closed adoption, birth parents were guaranteed strict confidentiality. They did not consent to have the adoption proceedings, birth records, or identifying information disclosed or opened to others at a later time. It would be wrong now for the state to disregard their wishes for a closed adoption and break the promises made to them to keep the records sealed.

We respectfully ask for a **Do Not Pass** recommendation on Senate Bill 2284.