2023 SENATE HUMAN SERVICES

SB 2230

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee
Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

SB 2230
1/23/2023

Relating to establishing an adoption assistance program for costs associated with the home study process; and to provide an appropriation.

10:07 AM **Madam Chair Lee** called the hearing to order. **Senators Lee, Cleary, Clemens, K. Roers, Weston, Hogan** were present.

Discussion Topics:

- References
- Domestic adoptions

10:08 AM **Senator David Clemens** introduced SB 2230 in favor #15457

10:12 AM **Mark Jorritsma, Executive Director, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action** testimony in favor #14913

Additional written testimony:
Jean Nasers, Interim Director, Christian Adoption Services testimony in favor #15288

10:14 AM **Madam Chair Lee** adjourned the meeting.

Patricia Lahr, Committee Clerk

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee
Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

SB 2230
1/23/2023
2:45 PM

Relating to establishing an adoption assistance program for costs associated with the home study process; and to provide an appropriation.

2:47 PM **Madam Chair Lee** called the committee meeting to order. **Senators Lee, Cleary, Clemens, K. Roers, Weston** were present. **Senator Hogan** was absent.

Discussion Topics:

- Domestic and international adoptions
- Adoption assistance
- Home assessments

2:54 PM **Senator Lee** closed the meeting.

Patricia Lahr*, Committee Clerk*

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee
Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

SB 2230
1/23/2023
3:15 PM

Relating to establishing an adoption assistance program for costs associated with the home study process; and to provide an appropriation.

3:15 PM **Madam Chair Lee** called the committee meeting to order. **Senators Lee, Cleary, Clemens, K. Roers, Weston** were present. **Senator Hogan** was absent.

Discussion Topics:

- Adoption home studies

3:15 PM **Julie M. Hoffman, Children and Family Services ND Department of Health and Human Services** verbally provided online information**.**

3:23 PM **Senator K. Roers** moved **DO PASS** and **REREFER** to **APPROPRIATONS.**
3:23 PM **Senator Weston** seconded.
Roll Call Vote

Senators	Vote
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator David A. Clemens	Y
Senator Kathy Hogan	AB
Senator Kristin Roers	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y

Motion passed. 5-0-1.

Senator Hogan was absent and the vote was held open for Senator Hogan.
On the afternoon of January 24, **Senator Hogan** voted yes on SB 2230.
Final vote:

Senators	Vote
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator David A. Clemens	Y
Senator Kathy Hogan	Y
Senator Kristin Roers	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y

Motion passed 6-0-0
Senator K. Roers will carry SB 2230.

3:32 PM **Senator Lee** closed the meeting.

Patricia Lahr*, Committee Clerk*

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SB 2230: Human Services Committee (Sen. Lee, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** and **BE REREFERRED** to the **Appropriations Committee** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2230 was rereferred to the **Appropriations Committee**. This bill does not affect workforce development.

2023 SENATE APPROPRIATIONS

SB 2230

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations
Rough Rider Room, State Capitol

SB 2230
2/2/2023

Relating to establishing an adoption assistance program for costs associated with the home study process; and to provide an appropriation

10:02 AM Chairman Bekkedahl called the meeting to order.
Senators Bekkedahl, Burkhard, Davison, Dever, Dwyer, Erbele, Krebsbach, Kreun, Mathern, Meyer, Roers, Schaible, Sorvaag, Vedaa, and Wanzek are present.

Discussion Topics:

- Adoption home study
- Cost
- Study criteria
- Program marketing
- Placement programs
- Pro life
- Adoption process

10:04 AM Senator Clemens introduced SB 2230.

10:12 AM Brett Bogran, ND adoptive parent, testified affirmatively. (No written testimony)

10:23 AM Senator Rust moved DO PASS motion. Senator Wanzek seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	Y
Senator Karen K. Krebsbach	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	Y
Senator Curt Kreun	Y
Senator Tim Mathern	Y
Senator Scott Meyer	Y
Senator Jim P. Roers	Y
Senator David S. Rust	Y
Senator Donald Schaible	Y
Senator Ronald Sorvaag	Y
Senator Shawn Vedaa	Y
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y

Motion passed. 16-0-0

Senator Roers will carry the bill.
10:25 AM Chairman Bekkedahl closed the meeting.

Carol Thompson, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SB 2230: Appropriations Committee (Sen. Bekkedahl, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (16 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2230 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

2023 HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES

SB 2230

2023 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee
Pioneer Room, State Capitol

SB 2230
3/6/2023

Relating to establishing an adoption assistance program for costs associated with the home study process; and to provide an appropriation.

Chairman Weisz called the meeting to order at 3:51 PM.

Chairman Robin Weisz, Reps. Karen A. Anderson, Mike Beltz, Clayton Fegley, Kathy Frelich, Dawson Holle, Dwight Kiefert, Carrie McLeod, Todd Porter, Brandon Prichard, Karen M. Rohr, and Gretchen Dobervich. Vice Chairman Matthew Ruby and Rep. Jayme Davis not present.

Discussion Topics:

- Alternatives to abortion
- Financial burden
- Adopting parents
- Timeliness of adoption process

Sen. Clemens introduced SB 2230 with supportive testimony (#22248).

Mark Jorristma, Executive Director of the North Dakota Family Alliance for Legislative Action, supportive testimony (#22091).

Christopher Dodson, Executive Director of the North Dakota Catholic Conference, spoke in support.

Additional written testimony:

Kacie Schulz, North Dakota citizen and parent, supportive testimony (#22179).

Shannon Beckermann, North Dakota citizen and parent, supportive testimony (#22235).

Sierra Heitkamp, Legislative Director for the North Dakota Right to Life, supportive testimony (#22240).

Chairman Weisz adjourned the meeting at 3:58 PM.

Phillip Jacobs, Committee Clerk

2023 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee
Pioneer Room, State Capitol

SB 2230
3/21/2023

Relating to establishing an adoption assistance program for costs associated with the home study process; and to provide an appropriation.

Chairman Weisz called the meeting to order at 11:23 AM.

Chairman Robin Weisz, Vice Chairman Matthew Ruby, Reps. Karen A. Anderson, Mike Beltz, Clayton Fegley, Kathy Frelich, Dawson Holle, Dwight Kiefert, Carrie McLeod, Karen M. Rohr, Jayme Davis, and Gretchen Dobervich present. Reps. Todd Porter and Brandon Prichard absent.

Discussion Topics:

- Committee work
- Amendments
- Identical bill

Chairman Weisz called for a discussion on SB 2230.

Rep. Beltz moved a do not pass on SB 2230.

Seconded by Rep. Fegley.

Roll Call Vote:

Representatives	Vote
Representative Robin Weisz	Y
Representative Matthew Ruby	Y
Representative Karen A. Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Beltz	Y
Representative Jayme Davis	Y
Representative Gretchen Dobervich	Y
Representative Clayton Fegley	Y
Representative Kathy Frelich	Y
Representative Dawson Holle	Y
Representative Dwight Kiefert	Y
Representative Carrie McLeod	Y
Representative Todd Porter	AB
Representative Brandon Prichard	AB
Representative Karen M. Rohr	Y

Motion carries 12-0-2.

Carried by Rep. Beltz.

Chairman Weisz adjourned the meeting at 11:29 AM.

Phillip Jacobs, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SB 2230: Human Services Committee (Rep. Weisz, Chairman) recommends **DO NOT PASS** (12 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2230 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar.

TESTIMONY

SB 2230

NORTH DAKOTA
Family Alliance LEGISLATIVE ACTION
Faith · Family · Freedom

Testimony in Support of House Bill 2230

Mark Jorritsma, Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action
January 23, 2023

Madam Chair Lee and honorable members of the Senate Human Services Committee. My name is Mark Jorritsma and I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action. We are submitting testimony in support of Senate Bill 2230 and respectfully request that you issue a "DO PASS" on this bill.

With the overturn of Roe v. Wade earlier this year and the likely upholding of our state's Trigger Law on abortions, expectant mothers will be seeking options other than abortion to address their circumstances. That's where adoption can come in. If as a state, we were the ones to make abortions illegal through our laws, it seems appropriate for us to come alongside these new mothers and help them with alternatives to abortion like adoption.

One way to do this is by helping families looking to adopt. Adoption costs can be substantial, so if there is a way for the State of North Dakota to help facilitate the process, all the better. Also, with the total potential outlay associated with this bill being capped at $250,000, it mitigates a possible increase in the number of ND adoptions post-Roe.

For the aforementioned reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action asks that you issue a "DO PASS" recommendation on SB 2230. With that, I'd be happy to stand for any questions.

1515 Burnt Boat Dr., Suite C-148, Bismarck, ND 58503
mark@NDfamilyalliance.org
701·355·6425
www.ndfamilyalliance.org

CHRISTIAN ADOPTION SERVICES
EST. 1985

Testimony of Jean Nasers
Interim Director of Christian Adoption Services

Before the North Dakota Senate Committee on Human Services on SB 2230

SUPPORT
January 23, 2023

Thank you, Ms. Chairperson, and members of the Committee for providing the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 2230. My name is Jean Nasers, and I am the interim director for Christian Adoption Services.

I am a wife and the biological mother of three children. One night my youngest son woke up in the middle of the night because of teething. As I held him close, my eyes filled with tears as I thought of all the moms that long to hold a baby in their arms. The next morning, my daughter and I giggled over a shared inside joke. A tinge of sorrow struck my heart as I thought of the silence so many parents experience during breakfast. That same day, I watched my husband play catch with our oldest son. I thought of all the amazing dads that would love to share one of these moments.

I share this with you because for the last four years I have walked with numerous families as they go through the adoption process. I speak with anywhere between 5-10 families in North Dakota a month interested in growing their family through domestic adoption. The desire of all of their hearts is the same: to provide for and love a child(ren), to be a family. The majority of families that seek to grow their family through adoption have been impacted by infertility and have already had a long, draining journey. They have gone through a good deal of emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical hardship in the hope of growing their family. Not all but many have spent a considerable amount of time and money on fertility treatments and/or surgery just for a chance to have a child. After thinking for a considerable amount of time, a family will decide that adoption is the best (and likely only) option for them to pursue to become parents, so they reach out to an adoption agency.

In North Dakota, the cost to for domestic infant adoption is approximately $25,000 from beginning to end. These costs typically cover application, orientation, home study, expectant parenting counseling, placement costs, and all the travel required to successfully complete an adoptive placement. Many families have to resort to taking out a personal loan in order to cover the costs associated with adoption because payment plans are not an option because services are provided immediately. Some of the costs associated with the adoption process vary from case to case; however, every adoptive family must complete a home study in order to adopt. The cost for a home study is approximately $4,000. The home study cost is a small portion of the entire cost of an adoption, but the home study is the most important and essential part of the adoption process because it is the part of the process that determines if a family is safe and healthy to adoption a child.

Currently, there is minimal assistance to help cover the cost of adoption for families. The time has arrived for North Dakota to provide support to these families by helping cover the cost of home studies. The funding provided by this bill would allow us to support families up front in the adoption process. If honored with the full amount of funds requested, my agency would use the funds completely for home studies and to offset the cost of adoption for adoptive families in North Dakota.

Please support Senate Bill 2230 so we can increase the support provided to adoptive families throughout North Dakota. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Sincerely,

Jean M. Nasers

Jean M Nasers

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2345 Meadow Ridge Parkway
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701.237.4473

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JANUARY 23, 2023

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

SB 2230

INTRODUCED BY:

SEN CLEMENS

I AM HERE TO INTRODUCE SB 2230 THAT WOULD HAVE THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ESTABLISH AN ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOME STUDY PROCESS.

THE PROGRAM WOULD ALLOW UP TO $5,000 PER HOME STUDY AND THE DEPARTMENT WOULD ADOPT RULES TO ESTABLISH ELIGIBILITY AND EXCLUSIONS FOR THE PROGRAM.

HOME STUDIES ARE USED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO DETERMINE A FAMILY'S READINESS TO ADOPT. THE STUDY CONSISTS OF DOCUMENTATION, HOME INSPECTION AND INTERVIEWS OF THE FAMILY MEMBERS. DOCUMENTATION WOULD INCLUDE FORMS OF IDENTIFICATION, BACKGROUND CHECKS, PROOF OF INSURANCE AND REFERENCES.

I SUPPORT SB 2230 AND WOULD ASK FOR A "DO PASS" RECOMMENDATION.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

SEN CLEMENS

NORTH DAKOTA
Family Alliance LEGISLATIVE ACTION
Faith · Family · Freedom

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2230

Mark Jorritsma, Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action
March 6, 2023

Good afternoon Chairman Weisz and honorable members of the House Human Services Committee. My name is Mark Jorritsma and I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action. We are submitting testimony in support of Senate Bill 2230 and respectfully request that you issue a "DO PASS" on this bill.

With the overturn of Roe v. Wade last year and the likely upholding of our state's Trigger Law on abortions, expectant mothers will be seeking options other than abortion to address their circumstances. That's where adoption can come in. If as a state, we were the ones to make abortions illegal through our laws, it seems appropriate for us to come alongside these new mothers and help them with alternatives to abortion like adoption.

One way to do this is by helping families looking to adopt. Adoption costs can be substantial, so if there is a way for the State of North Dakota to help facilitate the process, all the better. Also, with the total possible outlay associated with this bill being capped at $250,000, it mitigates the potential financial impact if adoptions post-Roe dramatically increase in North Dakota.

For the aforementioned reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action asks that you issue a "DO PASS" recommendation on SB 2230. With that, I'd be happy to stand for any questions.

1515 Burnt Boat Dr., Suite C-148, Bismarck, ND 58503
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701·355·6425
www.ndfamilyalliance.org

Good Afternoon Chairman Weisz and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

I am testifying in support of SB 2230 in my capacity as an adoptive mother and Cass County, ND resident.

My sons, now 5 and 3 years old, were born out-of-state but adopted into our family as infants while we lived in West Fargo. Adopting them into our family has been the greatest blessing of our lives.

Prior to their adoptions, we went through the home study process twice, once in 2016 and once in 2018. The cost of the home study did not exceed $5,000 but was labor and time intensive. It included gathering financial statements, personal interviews with the local adoption agency case worker, a psychological assessment, home inspection completed by the agency caseworker, and educational readings.

I support this bill because it supports the building of health families by reducing the financial burden of an already time-intensive process. Passage of this bill would reduce the financial burden for ND families hoping to adopt or families considering adoption who may not otherwise be able to afford it. This bill also indirectly supports mothers and fathers making adoption plans as well as indirectly supports the child being placed into a loving adoptive family.

The only improvements I would suggest would be the following:

1. In Section 1 lines 11-12 regarding eligibility and exclusions: My hope is that all ND families desiring to adopt would be eligible to have costs covered upon the completion of the process. I do not believe income should be a factor, for example. There are many other costs to adoption besides the home study process, and it remains expensive even for families with high incomes due to

placement costs, as families usually cover the entire cost of the agency's work on behalf of the expectant families in addition to the agency's work on behalf of the adopting family, since adoption counseling and placement services are generally free to expecting parents. The total cost of adoption to our family after paying for home study costs, adoption agency time and fees, attorney fees, travel and lodging was more than 10 times the cost of the home study alone.

2. In Section 1 lines 11-12 regarding eligibility and exclusions: Ensure that families choosing to work with any agency – secular or religious – are eligible. Our family worked with a Christian agency, and we would not want to be restricted from this program and/or have the agency restricted based on its, or our, religious beliefs.

Thank you so much for all you do and for your consideration of my testimony. Your work as lawmakers and civic leaders is truly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Kacie Schulz
Oxbow, ND

Public Testimony for SB 2230: Relating to establishing an adoption assistance program for costs associated with the home study process.

Submitted by Shannon Beckermann on March 6, 2023

I would like to start off by saying thank you for your consideration for this bill. If a bill like this were to be passed, it would be of substantial help in easing the financial burden to hopeful adoptive families who are pursuing adoption to grow their families.

My husband and I have unexplained infertility and decided soon after finding this out in 2017 that we would try to grow our family through adoption. Before finding out about our infertility, I hadn't ever considered adoption as I knew that the cost of it was so high. I didn't understand why it should cost families who cannot have biological children so much. When we started to look into different adoption agencies, we were surprised by the fees that we were facing. We decided to move forward anyways and to apply for grants to aid in helping us to pay for the fees. Since then, we have been blessed to have added two children to our family through adoption.

We are currently thinking about entering into the adoption process for a third adoption. If this bill were to be passed, it would not be a benefit to our family, but to many other families in North Dakota who are going through the adoption process. Thank you again for your consideration of this bill. I asked that you would consider voting in favor of this bill and providing much needed assistance to many hopeful adoptive families.

Thank you!

Best Regards,
Shannon Beckermann

North Dakota Right to LIFE

Chairman Robin Weisz and Members of the House Human Services Committee –

My name is Sierra Heitkamp and I am the Legislative Director for North Dakota Right to Life, the oldest and largest pro-life organization in our state. I am testifying today to represent the interests of our 3700 members across the state of North Dakota.

Since the overturn of Roe V. Wade on June 24, 2022, there have been many questions regarding what this means for women and families who find themselves in unplanned pregnancies in North Dakota. At North Dakota Right to Life, we questioned ourselves as to how our vision and goals may have to evolve moving forward to adequately protect those most vulnerable from conception to natural death.

After many conversations, the answer became clear – not only will we continue our work in protecting life at all stages, but we also want to back legislation that educates our citizens, encourages life, offers alternatives to abortion, and provides aid or resources to those who qualify. A woman or family who finds themselves with an unexpected pregnancy should never feel that abortion is their only option to achieve a successful, happy life.

SB 2230 would "*...establish an adoption assistance program to provide financial assistance for adoptive families*." We believe that this is a wonderful step in the right direction for mothers and families in our state as we look towards alternatives to abortion for unexpected pregnancies. This legislation, if passed, would help alleviate some of the costs of adoption in our state which will encourage families to look into this avenue as an alternative.

I ask this committee today for a **Do Pass recommendation on SB 2230** in order to protect mothers and families facing unexpected pregnancies and support families looking into adoption as we continue to promote and encourage life at all stages.

Thank you for your time today and I am available by phone or email to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Sierra M Heitkamp

Sierra M Heitkamp
NDRL Legislative Director

(701) 955-8239 office@ndrl.org P.O. Box 1325, Williston, ND 58801

MARCH 6, 2023

HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

SB 2230

SUBMITTED BY SEN DAVID CLEMENS

DISTRICT 16

I AM DAVID CLEMENS AND REPRESENT DISTRICT 16 IN THE SENATE. I AM HERE TO INTRODUCE SB 2230.

SB 2230 IS RELATING TO ESTABLISHING AN ADOPTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR COSTS ASSOCAITED WITH THE HOME STUDY PROCESS.

THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ESTABLISH AN ADOPTON ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILIES. THE PROGRAM MUST INCLUDE FUNDING FOR COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNIVERSALLY AND LAWFULLY REQUIRED HOME STUDY PROCESS NOT TO EXCEED $5,000 PER HOME STUDY. THE DEPARTMENT MAY ADOPT RULES TO ESTABLISH THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND EXCLUSIONS FOR THE PROGRAM.

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT STEP FOR THOSE CONSIDERING AN ADOPTION AND ASSISTING WITH THE HOME STUDY WILL HELP ENCOURAGE THOSE FAMILIES.

I HEREBY ASK FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF SB 2230 WITH A DO PASS RECOMMENDATION.

SINCERELY,

SEN DAVID CLEMENS