

Testimony in Support of SB 2226

Residential End-of-Life Facilities

House Human Services Committee

March 9, 2021 • 2:45 p.m. • Pioneer Room

Terry Rockstad

Chairman Weisz and members of the committee, my name is Terry Rockstad, Founder of the Rockstad Foundation and Rockstad Advocates, and I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 2226, which would add a new option for hospice patients by creating a licensure for residential end-of-life facilities.

A residential end-of-life facility has been my dream since 2014. I have had many friends who have experienced hospice care. For some, it was a blessing to provide hospice in their loved-one's home. For others, the stress and anxiety of becoming a loved one's primary caregiver was overwhelming, and the grief they experience each time they pass by the room in which their loved one died seems insurmountable.

I also know many people who struggle from the guilt of not being able to honor their loved one's wish of being in a home during end of life, and the loved one passes alone in an institutional setting. This has been especially evident during COVID-19. And finally, my heart breaks for those who simply do not have a family member or friend who is capable to provide the care needed when end of life is near.

The vision of the Rockstad Foundation is to remedy these scenarios. We want to support hospice programs by supplementing available end-of-life options with a residential facility that is similar to what is available in other states. Our understanding is North Dakota is one of the last states to have residential, homey places where end-of-life patients can spend their final days in comfort, surrounded by family and friends as they receive supportive care from trained providers.

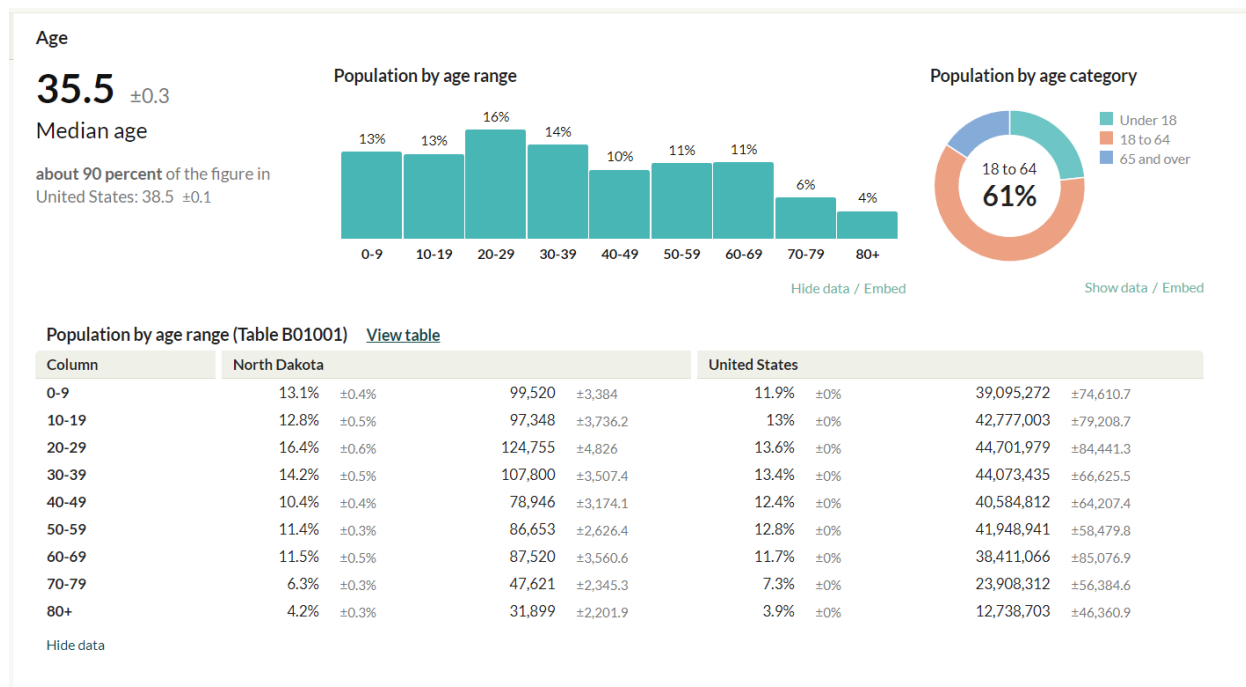
If Senate Bill 2226 passes, the Rockstad Foundation proposes to create a separate non-profit entity and to build a 100% privately funded and licensed residential end-of-life facility. Our dream is to build a development of twin homes in Bismarck where individuals receive hospice services from a licensed hospice provider of their choosing. Family could live with their loved one while facility staff will provide 24-hour supportive care, relieving families of difficult caretaking tasks. This type of residential end-of-life facility provides another option for those who do not have someone in their life to provide 24/7 care in their home, or do not want to burden family and friends with that responsibility. They also help families honor a loved one's wish of being in a home setting during life's final season. Kilee Harmon, our team member dedicated to this goal, will provide more details of our plan during her testimony.

Now, I grant that our proposed facility would be in Bismarck, but with passing Senate Bill 2226, other communities across the state could begin to work toward offering residential end-of-life facilities for their community members, especially for the elder population which is expected to grow. North Dakota's 65+ population use hospice services the most. According to CensusReporter.org, this group currently makes up 16% of the state's population and that number could increase by 11% in the next 10-15 years.

Right now, there is no true home setting in North Dakota where 24-hour supportive care is provided for those who seek hospice services and are unable to receive care in their home.

There could be with Senate Bill 2226.

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<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/04000US38-north-dakota/>