

**TESTIMONY ON HB 1416  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**March 10, 2021**

**By: Tara Fuhrer, Director Office of Early Learning**

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**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**

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Chairman Lee and Members of the Committee:

My name is Tara Fuhrer, Director of the Office of Early Learning with the Department of Public Instruction. I am here to provide information and speak in favor of HB 1416.

North Dakota continues to be committed to building high-quality early childhood experiences that enable children to have a strong foundation. DPI and DHS have long partnered on Birth - 5 related programs which is why DPI is in favor to consolidate the responsibility for early childhood experiences and services into one unified agency at the state level. DPI understands and supports the fact this is a reorganization at the state level that has no negative impact on the local programs and services.

North Dakota recognizes the need to unify state systems and is in support of taking action to ensure efficient use of resources. This will help to resolve the current complex Birth - 5 system, resulting in a stronger and more connected state system to serve our ND families through the Department of Human Services.

ND knows this is a critical step to setting a concrete foundation to support both the Birth - 5 and the K-12 systems. DPI recognizes behavioral health initiatives are also at the forefront of family and school partnerships. This bill's goal to be proactive by consolidating appropriate work into the Department Human Services will promote stronger early childhood experiences.

Chairman Lee and Members of the Committee that concludes my prepared testimony and I will stand for any questions that you may have.