

January 6, 2021  
Senate Human Services  
SB 2084  
Sen. Lee, Chair

Good morning Chairman Lee and members of the committee. For the record, I am Stephanie Dassinger and I am appearing on behalf of the Chiefs of Police Association of North Dakota. I am also the deputy director and attorney for the North Dakota League of Cities.

The Chiefs of Police appear today in opposition to SB 2084. The biggest issue with the bill is the constant reduction in options for people in mental health or substance abuse crises. There has been movement to keep people in crises out of incarceration; yet alternatives to incarceration are continually reduced. The Chiefs of Police agree that incarceration is not the place for most people suffering from mental health issues or substance abuse issues who have not committed serious offenses. There has been little to no communication with the Chiefs of Police about a long-term plan for individuals needing acute care in mental health or substance abuse areas.

Additionally, the phrase "if below capacity" is used in many places in the bill; however, it is unclear what this means in practice. The question that comes up is how far below capacity does the state hospital need to be? Several police departments have first-hand experience with the state hospital refusing to admit patients because they are "near capacity." Law enforcement needs more options for placing these individuals, not less.

The Chiefs of Police request a Do Not Pass recommendation on SB 2084.

Thank you for your consideration.