

SB 2258:

**Hearing of the Senate Human Services Committee, January 26, 2021
Testimony of Kristi Black, Four Winds High School**

I strongly support SB 2258, which would eliminate barriers to birth certificates by allowing people experiencing homelessness to get a birth certificate with only one form of ID (that can include a letter from a service provider) and allow unaccompanied homeless youth under 18 to get their own birth certificate. Homeless youth and parents often need basic vital documents like a birth certificate to access employment, education, health, housing, and other needed services. The current process to get a birth certificate leads to a catch-22: people need a birth certificate to get an ID, and an ID to get a birth certificate. I have worked with homeless youth who have needed a birth certificate and an ID in order to take a driver's test. Not only do homeless youth lack the funds to pay for such documents, they are hindered in seeking employment and services due to the amount of time required to acquire their documents. SB 2258 will eliminate this problem while adequately protecting against identity theft.

SB 2258 also makes sure that youth who are no longer staying with their parents can access their birth certificates. I worked with a young man who had been living on his own for over five years when he entered his freshman year. Due to his mother's habitual drug use he had not seen or talked to her in all of those years. He did graduate without assistance from her and is currently still struggling to find a place to call home. Currently, ND law allows vital records to be issued to individuals who are at least sixteen years old. SB 2258 would ensure this is not a barrier for youth who need a birth certificate to get a job or access education, housing, or other services. Better access to birth certificates will help homeless youth access basic services and benefits, keeping them safer and healthier, which will empower them to access education and employment that can end their homelessness.

I ask you to vote in favor of SB 2258. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at Kristi.black@k12.nd.us or 766-1400-1474.