

Testimony of Laurie Kadrmas
SB 2226
Senate Industry, Business and Labor Committee
Bismarck, North Dakota – February 1, 2021

Thank you, Chairman Klein and members of the Senate Industry, Business and Labor Committee for this opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Senate Bill 2226. My name is Laurie Kadrmas, and I'm a Bismarck resident. End-of-life care is dear to my heart because of my family's experience, which I will now share.

In 2000, my 46-year-old brother Terry was living alone in Tampa Bay, Florida when his cancer advanced requiring additional surgeries and aggressive treatment. As his treatment took its toll, I tried to support and provide care from a distance. And, when possible, I flew back and forth between North Dakota and Florida to be with him.

I am retired now, but at the time I was juggling Terry's care with a busy full-time Human Resources management position, and just newly married. Within a few months the distance and travel were a challenge, and Terry agreed and decided to relocate back home to North Dakota to live in my husband's and my home in Bismarck. We flew home together, and a moving company transported his belongings from Tampa Bay to my home.

We received help from hospice caregivers while Terry was living with us. The hospice staff were very helpful in guiding us in his care, talking to us about Terry's end-of-life journey, and helping us explain the process to his nephew and our young nieces.

Terry lived with us for seven months, until it became clear that the level of care he needed was increasing to a level I could no longer provide. Near the end of his time in our home, I was sleeping on the floor of his room so I would be close if he needed anything in the middle of the night. Unfortunately, at that time the hospice staff were stretched very thin and they were not able to provide 24/7 care.

Two weeks before he passed, we moved my brother to a hospital. It was a very hard decision. I know he was upset that he had to leave our home. That is something that still makes me sad 20 years later. If a homey, residential end-of-life facility had been available in Bismarck in 2001, I would have gladly moved my brother there for those final two weeks because I know he would have been more comfortable, and our family could have stayed with him whenever we wanted during those final days.

I am so grateful though that I was able to share our home with Terry during his last months. I am also thankful that our parents, other family members and his friends had the opportunity to visit Terry anytime they wanted within the comfort of our home. In addition, I'm so pleased my husband was able to get to know his brother-in-law better and spend time together.

However, not everyone has family members who are able to provide round-the-clock end-of-life care for their loved ones. In fact, our parents were not in a position to care for Terry in their home, so I feel very fortunate that I live in a home that could accommodate him. My employer was also very understanding about my family's situation. But, not everyone is as blessed.

North Dakotans need another option when it comes to choosing where they'll spend their final days. I know my brother would have preferred to remain in a home setting rather than be hospitalized at the end of his life. But that wasn't an option for him back then, and I didn't have the ability to honor his wish. But it could be an option for North Dakotans in 2021.

Please support the creation of a new chapter of code in Senate Bill 2226 to permit residential end-of-life facilities. North Dakota needs another option for kind and dignified end-of-life services, beyond the choice – die at home or in a non-home setting.

Thank you, Chairman Klein, and the members of the Senate Industry, Business and Labor Committee for hearing my testimony today.