

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SENATOR DIANE LARSON, CHAIRMAN
January 18, 2021

STEVEN HALL, DIRECTOR, TRANSITIONAL PLANNING SERVICES
NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS & REHABILITATION
PRESENTING TESTIMONY SENATE BILL 2178

My name is Steven Hall, and I am the Director for Transitional Planning Services within the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR). I am here to testify on behalf of the department in support of Senate Bill 2178.

Senate Bill 2178 modifies the language designating which entity—the Parole Board or the DOCR—may authorize residents’ participation in programs outside DOCR facilities based on the remainder of time individuals have left to serve on their sentences. Senate Bill 2178 also provides an increase to the compensation amount paid to the members of the North Dakota Parole Board.

Currently, authorization for residents’ participation in outside programs, including work release, is based on the length of an individual’s incarceration sentence. The Parole Board may authorize participation in outside programs for individuals who have been committed to the physical custody of the DOCR for a period of more than ten years. The DOCR Director may only authorize participation in outside programs for individuals with a sentence of ten years or less. Generally, individuals are most often participating in these programs toward the end of their sentence. Because the Parole Board meets only once per month, requiring Parole Board authorization impacts the efficiency with which authorizations for participation in outside programs, such as work release, is granted.

Allowing the DOCR Director to determine participation in outside programs based on the time remaining on a sentence creates a more efficient and responsive process. It

continues to rely on the Parole Board to provide authorization for individuals with significant time remaining on their sentence.

The current compensation for Parole Board members is set at \$75.00 per day and has not been adjusted in the last 20 years; the last change was in 2001. In 1997, the Pardon Advisory Board compensation was set at the same rate as it is for legislative members, which is significantly more than \$75.00 per day. It is time to create consistency and fair compensation for the Parole Board. The workload is significant. The responsibility is great. The service provided by Parole Board members is vital for the state's correctional system. Parole Board members deserve to be compensated fairly for their efforts.

Chairman Larson and committee members, I ask that you support the recommended changes in Senate Bill 2178.