

North Dakota Women's Network

**Kayla Schmidt – Interim Executive Director, North Dakota Women's Network
Support – HB 1509
North Dakota House Human Services Committee**

January 30, 2023

Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Kayla Schmidt and I am the Interim Executive Director of the North Dakota Women's Network. We are a statewide organization working towards improving the lives of women and their families. I am providing testimony in support of House Bill 1509.

Our mission includes empowering women to take an informed role in their health care decisions. We rely on medical experts to guide us in making these personal choices.

Any entity that promotes themselves as a medical or health-services provider should be maintained by individuals that specialize in those areas. This legislative session, several bills have been put forward which would designate state funds to pregnancy counseling services, including SB 2129 in which the alternatives-to-abortion program includes "medical services" within the definition of "support services."

When the state financially supports an entity, it implicitly endorses the authenticity of that entity.

Whereas the entities offering these counseling services may offer moral and spiritual support and can serve as a connection to community support networks, they may lack the professional healthcare training; best practices policies; and ability to record, analyze, and report data that demonstrates the program is operated effectively and without harm to those it serves.

HB1509 would create minimum standards to ensure those served by North Dakota's pregnancy counseling entities are receiving adequate, informed care. From a public health standpoint, any entity stating they provide medical or health-related services should be required to meet specific standards of care, including transparency in the types of services and procedures they provide, and a system that protects a patient's records and privacy.

Enforcing minimum standards can reduce the risk that an individual could receive misinterpreted or misrepresented medical advice given by an unqualified practitioner.

North Dakotans expect regulatory oversight from our government, especially for government-funded programs. HB1509 would help ensure that women seeking informed care from pregnancy counseling services are assisted by qualified professionals. We ask that HB1509 receives a "Do Pass" recommendation from this committee.

Thank you.

Kayla Schmidt
director@ndwomen.org