

Good Afternoon Chairman Weisz and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.

I am testifying in support of SB 2230 in my capacity as an adoptive mother and Cass County, ND resident.

My sons, now 5 and 3 years old, were born out-of-state but adopted into our family as infants while we lived in West Fargo. Adopting them into our family has been the greatest blessing of our lives.

Prior to their adoptions, we went through the home study process twice, once in 2016 and once in 2018. The cost of the home study did not exceed \$5,000 but was labor and time intensive. It included gathering financial statements, personal interviews with the local adoption agency case worker, a psychological assessment, home inspection completed by the agency caseworker, and educational readings.

**I support this bill because it supports the building of health families by reducing the financial burden of an already time-intensive process.**

Passage of this bill would reduce the financial burden for ND families hoping to adopt or families considering adoption who may not otherwise be able to afford it. This bill also indirectly supports mothers and fathers making adoption plans as well as indirectly supports the child being placed into a loving adoptive family.

**The only improvements I would suggest would be the following:**

1. In Section 1 lines 11-12 regarding eligibility and exclusions: My hope is that all ND families desiring to adopt would be eligible to have costs covered upon the completion of the process. I do not believe income should be a factor, for example. There are many other costs to adoption besides the home study process, and it remains expensive even for families with high incomes due to

placement costs, as families usually cover the entire cost of the agency's work on behalf of the expectant families in addition to the agency's work on behalf of the adopting family, since adoption counseling and placement services are generally free to expecting parents. The total cost of adoption to our family after paying for home study costs, adoption agency time and fees, attorney fees, travel and lodging was more than 10 times the cost of the home study alone.

2. In Section 1 lines 11-12 regarding eligibility and exclusions: Ensure that families choosing to work with any agency – secular or religious – are eligible. Our family worked with a Christian agency, and we would not want to be restricted from this program and/or have the agency restricted based on its, or our, religious beliefs.

Thank you so much for all you do and for your consideration of my testimony. Your work as lawmakers and civic leaders is truly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Kacie Schulz  
Oxbow, ND