



PROTECTION & ADVOCACY PROJECT

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**Senate State & Local Government Committee**

**Senate Bill 2308 – January 26, 2023**

**Veronica Zietz, ND Protection & Advocacy Project**

Greetings Chair Roers and members of the Senate State & Local Government Committee. My name is Veronica Zietz and I'm the Executive Director of the North Dakota Protection and Advocacy Project (P&A). P&A protects the human, civil and legal rights of people with disabilities. The agency's programs and services seek to make positive changes for people with disabilities where we live, learn, work and play.

The Help American Vote Act (HAVA) was signed into law in 2002 and overhauled federal elections in the United States by establishing minimum voting standards that each state and territory must follow. HAVA also authorized the provision of funds to P&A to ensure full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities (Title II, Subtitle D of the Help America Vote Act of 2002).

Voting is a fundamental right and responsibility for all North Dakotans, including those with disabilities that make up approximately 25% of North Dakota voters. The Americans with Disabilities Act and HAVA require state, local, and federal governments to ensure that voters with disabilities have an equal opportunity to vote. A component of ensuring that opportunity exists for people with disabilities is accessibility. Furthermore, polling places are required to reasonably modify policies, practices, and procedures for people with disabilities. Examples of reasonable modifications include voting from home and mailing in a ballot.

Senate Bill 2308 restricts access to voting options needed by people with disabilities who can't easily make it to a polling site. Many individuals with a disability have mobility impairments, lack access to transportation, don't have support people to provide assistance in getting to the polls, or have limited access to technology-based voting solutions. In these situations, mail ballots are essential to participating in the electoral process. I respectfully request the Committee oppose SB 2308, because it will limit voting rights and voting access for individuals with disabilities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Veronica Zietz, Executive Director ND Protection & Advocacy Project