2025 SB 2297
House Human Services Committee
Representative Ruby, Chairman
March 12, 2025

Chairman Ruby and members of the House Human Services Committee. My name is Brittney Blake, and I serve as Corporate Counsel at Altru Health System. I am honored to represent Altru Health System and share my passion for ensuring patients remain at the heart of everything we do in healthcare and proud to be part of improving healthcare for the communities we serve. I write in favor of Senate Bill 2297 and ask that you give this bill a **Do Pass** recommendation.

SB 2297 seeks to provide guidance to health care professionals when caring for an incapacitated individual when unrepresented. An unrepresented patient is an individual that lacks the physical and/or mental ability to make decisions for him or herself, and also does not have any identifiable friends, family, or caregivers who can or will serve as a substitute decision-maker.

At Altru, when our providers, nurses and case managers are caring for an incapacitated, unrepresented patient, we do absolutely everything to identify a next of kin or even neighborhood friend of the patient to help make healthcare decisions for the patient. Although we annually promote the need for having healthcare directives on file at our facility, the grim reality is that we often have unrepresented patients without friends, family or a healthcare directive on file. As a result, the unrepresented patient has no one to help make non-emergent treatment decisions on their behalf, and our healthcare providers cannot provide non-emergent treatment without the informed consent of a decision-maker.

The proposed changes to N.D.C.C. § 23-12-13 would provide an option for an interdisciplinary team of healthcare professionals to be able to consider and consent to treatment in the patient's best interest, while continuing to work tirelessly to find suitable decision-makers for the patient.

We ask that you give a Do Pass recommendation on SB 2297. Thank you for your consideration.

Thank you,

Brittney Blake