

HB1600 Testimony
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Chair Klemin and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Brian Pappas and I serve as Dean of the University of North Dakota School of Law. I write in support of HB 1600. There are numerous reasons that support passing this bill. Attorney fees for immigration matters often cost \$15,000-20,000. Providing services at low/no cost will be beneficial to both North Dakota employers and potential employees. We have a large need for immigration attorneys in North Dakota, and I understand there are only one or two practicing in the entire state. As a result, this clinic would not take business away from any practicing attorneys. An immigration clinic will also build capacity by training future lawyers to handle immigration matters. This clinic could train 5-20 students per year with the skills they need to provide much needed services once they become lawyers. While the law school has multiple clinical opportunities, we do not have funding to either hire an additional clinician or to operate this clinic.

There are also three main areas of concern regarding this bill. First, in Section 1.2, the bill notes, "A law school student may be assigned to handle approximately one matter per semester." Students will likely be assigned to handle more than one matter. Due to filing times, students will likely need to focus on numerous cases in various stages of process.

Next, in Section 1.5, the bill states, "The immigration law clinic shall apply for grants for the repayment of filing fees, attorney's fees, relocation expenses, and other costs associated with the immigration law clinic." The goal of the clinic is to offer legal services for low or no attorney fees. Applying for grants would detract from the mission of the clinic. Further, in employment immigration, certain filing fees are required by law to be paid by the employer and no one else can pay the fees. No law firm or law clinic pays for relocation expenses of its clients.

Finally, in Section 2, the bill authorizes the clinic to operate for the next two years. As many actions take at least 5 years, ideally the clinic would be funded for four years to avoid employers needing to change counsel in the middle of a legal action.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of HB1600.