

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SENATE BILL 2224
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
MARCH 12, 2025

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Tara Felice, and last week, I testified before the Senate in support of House Bill 1525. Today, I want to address some of that testimony and explain why I oppose Senate Bill 2224, which directly conflicts with House Bill 1525.

I have worked for Mandan Baseball Club for over eight years. During this time, I have seen firsthand how charitable gaming strengthens our communities by supporting vital programs. Beyond my professional experience, I am a wife and mother to two children, and I take great pride in working with an organization that not only provides recreational opportunities for our youth but also reinvests its earnings into local charities and initiatives.

Charitable gaming is a crucial part of North Dakota's nonprofit sector, directly benefiting programs that serve youth, veterans, education, and other community-driven initiatives. These organizations exist solely to reinvest in our communities, filling gaps that might otherwise require taxpayer funding. It is essential that charitable gaming oversight remains fair, transparent, and structured in a way that supports—not hinders—these missions.

Currently, the Attorney General's Office holds all regulatory authority over charitable gaming. While well intended, this structure limits accessibility and leaves charities navigating complex regulations with little direct input or clarity. A dedicated Gaming Commission, as refined in House Bill 1525, would introduce necessary checks and balances, creating a more open and collaborative regulatory environment. Instead of leaving organizations uncertain about compliance expectations, a commission would provide clear, consistent guidance and a forum for meaningful engagement with stakeholders.

A month ago, the House passed House Bill 1525 with overwhelming support (72-13), demonstrating a clear demand for fair, transparent, and balanced oversight. This bill strengthens charitable gaming regulation by refining the current Gaming Commission allowing them to

handle complaints, ensuring compliance, and providing clear regulatory guidance. It fosters transparency while preventing the overreach of a single office.

Senate Bill 2224, which we are here for today, seeks to abolish the Gaming Commission and returns all control to the Attorney General's Office—consolidating power instead of fostering accountability and oversight. This move would eliminate transparency and weaken public trust in the system.

I respectfully ask for a 'Do Not Pass' recommendation on SB 2224, and instead uphold the reforms set forth in House Bill 1525, which ensures structured regulation, public accessibility to hearings, and protection for charities from regulatory uncertainty.

Thank you for your time and consideration.