



NORTH DAKOTA

Family Alliance LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2352

Mark Jorritsma, Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action
March 11, 2025

Dear Chairman Klemin and honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Mark Jorritsma and I am the Executive Director of North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action. I am testifying on behalf of our organization in support of Senate Bill 2352 and respectfully request that you render a “DO PASS” on this bill.

SB 2352 is intended to allow for a young child of a female inmate at the Heart River Correctional Center to stay with his/her mother. We believe that allowing for this accomplishes a number of positive outcomes.

First, the mother-child bond is fundamental to the structure of the family, something that is being undermined more every day. If a mother is incarcerated, the family is already disrupted, but it is certainly beneficial to the extent that situation can be mitigated. One of the best reasons to keep an infant or young child with his/her mother is to establish a child’s secure attachment to their mother and, in turn, provide as stable of a future family as possible under the circumstances.

Our second point is that residing together with their child can encourage and provide a concrete reason for a mother to make better personal choices that can result in a more positive future. The love a mother feels toward her child, particularly a very young child, can be a source of hope for the future and motivation to be the best version of herself that she can be.

Third, the bill allows for a level of operational freedom for the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (NDDOCR) to structure this program. This gives them the opportunity to potentially integrate aspects such as parenting skills, support groups, drug rehabilitation, and personal growth/maturity training. If this bill becomes law, we would strongly encourage NDDOCR to look at other states that have implemented similar programs to determine the most beneficial way to handle these elements of the program. If done well,

allowing this parent-child relationship to grow and providing life skills to the mothers could truly help fulfil the “rehabilitation” part of our state prisons.

Finally, the problems with putting children in foster care are numerable and well documented, although sometimes it is the only option. However, to the extent that this program could keep children, especially young children, out of the foster care system or at least delay it, we see it as another positive outcome.

For the aforementioned reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action requests that you render a “DO PASS” on Senate Bill 2352. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony, and feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Mark Jorritsma
Executive Director
North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action