



**Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs**  
**SB 2022**  
**February 13, 2025**

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Senate Bill No. 2222. My name is Kirsten Dvorak, and I am the executive director of The Arc of North Dakota. I am here today to express opposition to this bill, which could create unintended barriers for individuals with disabilities and those who support them.

While the bill aims to regulate the use of assistance animals and prevent fraud, it may unintentionally limit access for individuals with legitimate needs. The bill imposes new requirements on healthcare providers issuing documentation for assistance animals, including multiple assessments and waiting periods, which could be particularly burdensome for individuals in rural or underserved areas. Additionally, those with rare and complex medical needs often already encounter significant challenges in accessing specialized care. The added procedural hurdles could further delay or obstruct their ability to receive necessary accommodations.

The bill also establishes penalties for the misrepresentation of assistance animals. While it is important to prevent fraudulent claims, stringent penalties may disproportionately affect individuals who do not fully understand the legal requirements. Education and awareness initiatives would serve as a more effective way to address misuse while maintaining accessibility for those with genuine needs.

Another concern is the bill's potential impact on housing rights. While it states that it does not alter federal protections under the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, its additional documentation requirements could deter landlords and property managers from accommodating assistance animals. This may lead to unintended consequences for individuals seeking essential housing accommodations.

Although fraud prevention is an important goal, the bill should focus on the increasing problem of falsified documentation acquired through online sources instead of imposing unnecessary burdens on those who genuinely need assistance.

In conclusion, while ensuring accountability is important, Senate Bill No. 2222 should be revised to better balance fraud prevention with accessibility and fairness. I urge the committee to reconsider elements of this bill to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not unfairly affected.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

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