



# North Dakota House of Representatives

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## House Bill 1464 Senate Human Services Committee Testimony of Rep. Gretchen Dobervich, Bill Sponsor March 5, 2025

Good morning Chairwoman Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee. For the record my name is Representative Gretchen Dobervich, I work for the people of District 11 in Fargo. I am here today to introduce House Bill 1464, which originally sought to establish postpartum doula certification and Medicaid coverage for postpartum doula services in North Dakota.

This bill recognizes the critical role doulas play in supporting parents and newborns during the postpartum period, the first six months after birth. Research consistently shows that doula care improves maternal mental health, reduces postpartum depression, and enhances infant outcomes by providing continuous physical, emotional, and educational support. By extending these services up to six months postpartum, we are addressing a vulnerable time when many parents experience challenges related to recovery, bonding, and breastfeeding.

The establishment of a doula program was not in the Governor's budget therefore House Bill 1464 was amended in House and the fiscal note of \$280,000 for the biennium removed. Further amendments call for a registry and a report to Legislative Management. Without a formal program and third-party funding passage of HB 1464 becomes an unfunded mandate with no action towards making post-partum doula services accessible for North Dakotans who utilize Medicaid.

Instead of moving forward with an unfunded mandate that does not benefit families I ask the Senate Human Services Committee to consider amending HB 1464 to an interim study of the development of doula services in North Dakota, which includes, but is not limited to, what is currently available, education and certification, and resources needed to establish a Medicaid program.

The NDDHHS Medical Services Division Director, Community Engagement Unit Associate Director and Foundation for a Healthy North Dakota were consulted and provided input in the development of this bill and my testimony today.

I urge you to support amending House Bill 1464 to strengthen maternal care, reduce disparities, and provide families with the essential support they need during the critical postpartum period. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.