

## **HB 1556**

Good morning, Chair Lee, Vice Chair Weston and members of the Senate Human Services Committee. For the record, I am Greg Stemen, State Representative for District 27 in Southern Cass County and South Fargo.

I am here this morning to introduce HB 1556. First, however, I want to commend Health and Human Services and their legal counsel, along with Legislative Council, for working together to find the most appropriate language for this bill. In my opinion, that is how government should function, by coming together to find the most reasonable solution possible. I am grateful to all parties for working on this legislation for the benefit of those who need it most.

HB 1556 deals with extremely difficult situations that affect a small number of families in our state, both adoptive and biological. Families may find themselves in the most unimaginable set of circumstances. An example is having three siblings in your family and coming to the realization that the oldest of the three was sexually abusing the younger two. I doubt that any of us would be adequately prepared to handle that situation without the help of necessary services. In this case, the children would possibly require protective services while the parents and children would also need to have their rights protected.

During my time researching this bill, I was told by experienced individuals in this field that sadly, situations like this happen more often than people realize. To me, that is very difficult to hear.

Chair Lee, at this time, I would like to ask Mr. Jonathan Alm to come to the podium to explain the details of the language that is in the bill as it was passed by the House. Given the technical nature of some of the provisions and the inter-connectedness of various sections of law, he is much better equipped than I am to answer questions the committee may have.

Thank you, Chair Lee and committee members, and I am willing to stand for general questions if the committee desires.