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- Business co-owner of several entities in ND involving land, minerals, water, and real estate
- Associates degree at Williston State College, BS in Chemistry at Dickinson State University, Doctor of Chiropractic at Northwestern Health Sciences University, Master's degree in Human Nutrition and Functional Medicine at University of Western States, and Doctorate in Clinical Nutrition at University of Western States
- Married with 5 children

Chairman Barta and Members of the Senate Industry and Business Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 1391 and to respectfully urge a "DO PASS" recommendation from this committee. This bill is a crucial step toward ensuring that all North Dakotans are protected from discrimination based on their health status and medical choices. As a fundamental issue of individual rights and medical freedom, this legislation affirms the principle that no person should face prejudice or unequal treatment due to their personal health circumstances or decisions.

The addition of "health status" as a protected category aligns with North Dakota's commitment to fairness, equal opportunity, and personal autonomy. Discrimination based on health status can take many forms, including employment barriers, access to education, housing restrictions, and public accommodations. Without explicit protections, individuals with chronic conditions, disabilities, or those who exercise informed consent regarding medical treatments may face undue hardship and exclusion from full participation in society.

This bill does not create new obligations for businesses or healthcare providers beyond what is already required under existing non-discrimination laws. Instead, it reinforces the idea that medical decisions—whether they involve vaccination, medical treatments, or other health-related choices—should not be grounds for differential treatment. Medical privacy and autonomy are foundational principles in our healthcare system, and HB 1391 ensures that individuals are not coerced or penalized for making personal health decisions.

Furthermore, HB 1391 is consistent with broader constitutional principles, including the right to bodily autonomy and the protection of personal freedoms. Federal courts have long recognized the importance of informed consent and the right to refuse medical treatment (*Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health*, 497 U.S. 261, 1990). This bill ensures that North Dakota upholds these principles by safeguarding individuals from discrimination related to their health status.

Passing HB 1391 would send a clear message that North Dakota values personal freedom and equal treatment under the law. It would affirm our state's commitment to protecting citizens from undue discrimination while ensuring that individuals retain the right to make informed choices about their health without fear of reprisal or exclusion.

I respectfully urge this committee to provide a "DO PASS" recommendation for HB 1391 and to advance this important protection for the people of North Dakota.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Schmitz', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Jake Schmitz
President, Association of Wellness Chiropractors
Fargo, ND