

**SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
SENATOR DIANE LARSON, CHAIR
MARCH 18, 2025**

**TOM ERHARDT, CHIEF PAROLE AND PROBATION OFFICER
PRESENTING TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1347**

Chair Larson and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Tom Erhardt, and I am the Chief Parole and Probation Officer of North Dakota Parole, Probation and Pretrial Services, a division of the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The Parole, Probation and Pretrial Services Division is responsible for delivering correctional supervision to over seven thousand adults released from prison by the authority of the North Dakota Parole Board, sentenced to supervised by probation or ordered to pretrial supervision by district courts, and transferred to North Dakota via the Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision. Our staff of approximately one hundred fifty work out of seventeen district offices throughout the state. I stand before you today to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1347.

House Bill 1030 has been passed by the House Senate awaiting the Governor's signature and changes "drug courts" to "treatment courts" in statute. For purposes of this testimony, I will refer to all as "treatment courts". The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) Parole, Probation, and Pretrial Services Division supports eight treatment courts in North Dakota. Veteran's Treatment Court in Grand Forks, treatment court in Bismarck, Jamestown, two in Fargo, Grand Forks, Wahpeton, and Minot. The division

provides supervision and case management for participants in each of these treatment courts by assigning probation officers and drug court coordinators to the team to fulfill this role. DOCR provides a program manager who supervises staff, manages the program, coordinates treatment services in some areas, and coordinates of program evaluation. House bill 1347 clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved with treatment courts throughout North Dakota. Throughout the past year leaders from the DOCR, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Office of the State Court Administrator have met to discuss this issue and have all agreed that clarifying roles in statute would ensure that each entity would perform its duties within the scope of the statute, mission, and policies of each agency.

In Section 1 of the bill a new section to chapter 27-05 of the North Dakota Century Code is created. It lists that the DOCR shall supervise offenders sentenced to probation in accordance with the department policies. Next, it states that the Department of Health and Human Services shall oversee treatment services according to the policies, procedures, and best practices of the department. Finally, it states that the district court shall provide judicial direction, guidance, and coordination with all approved treatment and compliance related to specialized dockets.

Adult treatment courts in North Dakota have proven effective. A 2022 outcome evaluation of adult DWI/drug court programs by North Dakota State University showed that participating in a drug court in North Dakota reduces one-year and two-year recidivism rates by 10% on average, and up to 20% for the

highest performing program. These programs are an essential, cost-effective alternative to incarceration that works for those defendants who successfully complete them. Providing statutory guidance in the roles and responsibilities of each entity will ensure that the framework for future successes is set far beyond current agency leadership.

Please consider a “do pass” on House Bill 1347. I will stand to answer any questions I can. Thank you.