

Dr. Marissa Wisdom
Testimony in Opposition to HB 1511
Senate Judiciary Committee
March 17, 2025

Chair Larson, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Dr. Marissa Wisdom. I'm an obstetrician in Bismarck, North Dakota. I'm originally from Washburn, North Dakota and I completed my undergraduate and medical degrees in North Dakota. I chose to move back to North Dakota to begin my career after my residency training at the University of Iowa. I've been in practice in Bismarck for 15 1/2 years. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am asking for a do not pass of HB1511.

Obtaining a medical license is a rigorous procedure that requires documentation of medical education, residency training in a specialty, three separate licensing exams, fingerprinting, and completion of a background check. This process takes several months in most cases. Specialty board certification in obstetrics and gynecology requires completion of four years of a medical residency training program, passage of a lengthy test on medical knowledge, then after being out in practice one year's surgical cases and deliveries are submitted to the Board for review, and finally an oral examination by national board examiners must be passed. Maintenance of board certification includes yearly completion of peer reviewed journal articles selected by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and quizzes on that material. Obstetricians in North Dakota do not need more required training for medical licensure. We have been trained well, passed numerous required examinations, and understand the laws on abortion in North Dakota.

I have significant concerns that the medical licensure or renewal requirements of HB 1511 will impair recruitment of obstetricians to North Dakota. I also have concerns that retaining obstetricians in this state will become increasingly difficult if this bill is passed. It is very difficult to recruit new obstetricians, and this is yet one more obstacle to licensure, making it challenging to begin or continue a career in this specialty in ND. Obstetricians are being singled out to complete special training for ND medical licensure.

Also, I have concerns regarding development of the instructional course in HB 1511. I feel it is an inappropriate requirement to offer the contract for the instructional course to an individual who is or an organization that includes a physician with a minimum of 25 years' experience in the practice of obstetrics in the State. Although experience in obstetrics provides a physician with more confidence, up to date medical knowledge of a physician is at its peak closer to completion of residency training. Years of experience does not guarantee knowledge on current best practices or standards of care in obstetrics. Also 25 years of experience does not guarantee knowledge on legal interpretation of abortion laws.

Additionally, this law will deny anyone who relies on the content of the required educational course from having any legal recourse should they be penalized for actions taken in reliance on the instruction. I would think that if the course instructor is confident in the education provided, they would be willing to stand by that training in legal proceedings. Developing a program to instruct obstetricians on abortion laws in North Dakota but not protecting them based on the training they were given seems contradictory to me.

I fear HB1511 will cause more obstetricians to stop providing obstetric care earlier in their career or leave the state. This will negatively impact access to obstetric care to the women of ND.

Please vote do not pass on HB 1511. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Marissa Wisdom, MD FACOG