

2025 HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES

HB 1072

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE PIONEER ROOM, STATE CAPITOL

HB 1072
1/13/2025

Relating to foster care homes for children and adults

3:41 p.m. Chairman M. Ruby called the meeting to order.

Members present: Chairman M. Ruby, Vice Chairman Frelich, Representatives Anderson, Beltz, Bolinske, Davis, Dobervich, Fegley, Hendrix, Holle, Kiefert, Rios, Rohr

Discussion Topics:

- Language cleanup
- Guardianship subsidies
- Time frames

3:41 p.m. Kelsey Bless, Licensing Unit Administrator of Children and Family Services, ND HHS, testified in support and submitted testimony in support. #28520.

3:47 p.m. Desiree Sorenson, director of Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone, testified in support and submitted testimony in support #28540.

3:51 p.m. Chairman Ruby closed the hearing.

3:51 p.m. Representative Beltz moved a Do Pass.

3:52 p.m. Representative Rohr seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Matthew Ruby	Y
Representative Kathy Frelich	Y
Representative Karen Anderson	Y
Representative Mike Beltz	Y
Representative Macy Bolinske	Y
Representative Jayme Davis	Y
Representative Gretchen Dobervich	Y
Representative Cleyton Fegley	Y
Representative Jared Hendrix	Y
Representative Dawson Holle	Y
Representative Dwight Kiefert	Y

Representative Nico Rios	Y
Representative Karen Rohr	Y

3:52 p.m. Moton passed. 13-0-0

3:53 p.m. Representative Beltz will carry the bill.

3:53 p.m. Chairman Ruby adjourned the meeting.

Jackson Toman, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1072 ([25.8091.01000](#))

Human Services Committee (Rep. M. Ruby, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (13 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1072 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.

Testimony
House Bill No.1072
House Human Services Committee
Representative Matthew Ruby, Chairman
January 13, 2025

Chairman Ruby, and members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Kelsey Bless, Licensing Administrator with Children and Family Services under the Department of Health and Human Services (Department). I appear before you in support of House Bill No.1072, which was introduced at the request of the Department.

As a leader in ND child welfare, it is important to have clarity in the century code, which governs our administrative code and policy. The Department proposed these changes to offer consistency and clarity for child welfare practitioners. I also want to note, as indicated in the fiscal note, that the changes proposed in House Bill No. 1072 will not affect the Department's budget.

Section 1:

The proposed changes in Section 1 of this Bill amend section 50-11-03.2 of the North Dakota Century Code regarding use of public funds. Page 1, lines 17 through 19 consists of two small clerical changes meant to enhance clarity of statutory authority as well as acknowledge the use of public funds, whether federal or state, for guardianship subsidy in our state. Guardianship is pursued as an alternative to foster care in circumstances where a family member or other suitable guardian is willing and able to accept responsibility for the care of the child. Guardianship subsidy is reimbursed to families by the use of federal funds; however, state general funds are an allowable option for children

who do not meet the federal guardianship eligibility guidelines. The proposed changes reflect current processes for guardianship subsidy.

Section 2:

The proposed changes in Section 2 of this Bill amends section 50-11-07 of the North Dakota Century Code to provide a specific timeframe in which the Department will review child welfare history for a prospective or current foster care provider. Page 2, lines 9 through 12 will authorize the Department to review any current or historical child welfare court involvement in the applicant or foster care provider's home. If the individual has or had their own child removed from the home and placed into foster care, the Department could deny the new licensing application or revoke the current license to provide foster care to children. The five-year specification proposed in this Bill reflects the timeframe required by the adoption home study, which will provide consistency for current foster care providers selected for adoption.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.

Testimony Prepared for the
House Human Services Committee

January 13, 2025

By: Desiree Sorenson, Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone Director

RE: HB 1072 Relating to foster care homes for children and adults.

Chair Ruby, and members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Desiree Sorenson. I am the Director for the Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone, which includes the counties of Mountrail and McKenzie. In addition, I serve as Vice-Chair of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. I also served as a member of the Adoption Redesign team. I am here today to provide testimony in Support of House Bill 1072.

As the legal custodian of children in public foster care, there are times when individuals seeking to become a permanency option (such as adoptive parent or legal guardian) need financial assistance in order to establish legal rights of a foster child. This is key so that the child may find a forever home and no longer need to be in foster care.

Guardianship is pursued as an alternative to foster care in circumstances where a family member or other suitable guardian is willing and able to accept responsibility for the care of the child. Guardianship subsidy is reimbursed to families by the use of federal funds; however, state general funds are an allowable option for children who do not meet the federal guardianship eligibility guidelines. The proposed changes reflect current processes for guardianship subsidy that the zone will apply for on behalf of the child and individuals seeking to have guardianship of the child. HB 1072 will provide

critical supports to eliminate existing barriers to timely and appropriately permanency planning for youth in our foster care system.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony regarding House Bill 1072. I stand for questions from the committee.

2025 SENATE HUMAN SERVICES

HB 1072

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

HB 1072
2/11/2025

Relating to foster care homes for children and adults.
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9:49 a.m. Chairman Lee opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Lee, Vice-Chairman Weston, Senator Van Oosting, Senator Clemens, Senator Hogan, Senator Roers.

Discussion Topics:

- State General Funds
- Tribal nations
- Total kinship placements
- Licensed foster homes

9:50 a.m. Kelsey Bless, Licensing Administrator with Children and Family Services with Department of Health and Human Services, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36565.

10:02 a.m. Dennis Meier, Director of Three Rivers Human Service Zone, testified in favor and submitted testimony #36501.

10:10 a.m. Senator Hogan moved Do Pass.

10:10 a.m. Senator Van Oosting seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y
Senator David A. Clemens	Y
Senator Kathy Hogan	Y
Senator Kristin Roers	Y
Senator Desiree Van Oosting	Y

Motion passed 6-0-0.

Senator Van Oosting will carry the bill.

10:10 a.m. Chairman Lee closed the hearing.

Andrew Ficek, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1072 ([25.8091.01000](#))

Human Services Committee (Sen. Lee, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1072 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

Testimony Prepared for the
Senate Human Services Committee

February 11, 2025

By: Dennis Meier, Three Rivers Human Service Zone Director

RE: HB 1072 - Foster care homes for children and adults

Chair Lee, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, my name is Dennis Meier. I'm the Director of the Three Rivers Human Service Zone, which includes the counties of Morton, Sioux and Grant. In addition, I'm a member of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1072.

Human Service Zones provide critical services for North Dakota communities. We administer economic assistance programs. We also administer child welfare services, which include child protection, foster care, and in-home case management as well as receiving referrals for Children in Need of Services (CHINS).

When zones are tasked with finding placement for children who can't reside in their parents' homes, we try to place them with extended family members and "fictive kin" — like a neighbor, a teacher, or a coach. We do this because even when home is not a safe place to be, it's also traumatic to be removed from home. Living with a familiar face and a loving connection offers children more certainty and relational continuity during a time when nothing else is normal.

However, even when we can identify relatives and kin, they don't always have the means to provide long-term care for a child. As you are aware, raising kids is costly. Our agencies offer some support to help cover costs like beds and clothing; but the ongoing expenses of food, childcare, and extracurricular activities are often too much for relatives and kin to absorb over an extended period. Additionally, foster home licensing and adoption processes can take weeks or months, which creates another barrier to placing children with people they know and love.

Relatives and fictive kin have been eligible for maintenance payments for approximately two years, which has been a game-changer for our zones. It has provided emotional and placement stability for children. However, the demand for these placements is still so high that Child and Family Services have leveraged emergency temp employee positions to process requests to ensure optimal, legal emergency care for children. By ensuring that unlicensed relatives and fictive kin remain represented in our Century Code, you're supporting better emotional, relational, and academic outcomes for children who receive out-of-home placement.

By expanding maintenance payments eligibility to legal guardians, this bill helps alleviate financial barriers for caregivers who have committed to guardianship of children needing long-term care.

Strengthening support for relative and kin caregivers is one of the most common-sense approaches we can take to ensure that people don't have to choose between caring for a loved one and experiencing poverty, and to ensure that our welfare system remains agile in its effort to provide safe, stable, and comfortable homes for children in need of placement.

On behalf of the North Dakota Association of Human Service Zone directors, I urge a do pass on HB 1072. Thank you for your consideration.

I stand for questions from the committee.



Health & Human Services

Testimony
House Bill No.1072
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Judy Lee, Chairman
February 11, 2025

Chair Lee, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Kelsey Bless, Licensing Administrator with Children and Family Services under the Department of Health and Human Services (Department). I appear before you in support of House Bill No. 1072, which was introduced at the request of the Department.

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who do not meet the federal guardianship eligibility guidelines. The proposed changes reflect our current processes for guardianship subsidy.

Section 2:

The proposed changes in Section 2 of this Bill amends section 50-11-07 of the North Dakota Century Code to provide a specific timeframe in which the Department will review child welfare history for a prospective or current foster care provider. Page 2, lines 9 through 12 will authorize the Department to review any current or historical child welfare court involvement in the applicant or foster care provider's home. If the individual has or had their own child removed from the home and placed into foster care, the Department could deny the new licensing application or revoke the current license to provide foster care to children. The five-year specification proposed in this Bill reflects the timeframe required by the adoption home study, which will provide consistency for current foster care providers selected for adoption.

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