

HOUSE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Honorable Representative Weisz, Chairman

SB 2123 Testimony

March 3, 2021

Chairman Weisz and Committee Members,

My name is Brad Bekkedahl from Williston representing District 1. I'm here today to introduce and ask for your support for Senate Bill 2123. This bill came about through a personal experience I had in requesting a death certificate from my brother that was born in 1955 and passed away from a birth defect at less than 3 months of age. I am at the stage in life where my nephews and nieces are starting families and having children. Several have asked me about my infant brother's specific birth defect to see if this is an issue that they need to consider in their pregnancy decisions or have tests to determine if there are any genetic links to defects in our family. I was surprised when I went to the office of Vital Records in the Capitol to learn that as his brother, I was not eligible under statute to receive a copy of his death certificate that listed his cause of death. I could get a death certificate without this information as his brother, but the only people eligible to get the cause of death certificate would be his parents (both now deceased) or his children (which he had none). The attendant was very polite and helpful and explained the only way I could now get this information would be through a court order. Not being very legally savvy, I wondered about how difficult this could be for other North Dakotans that may also need this information, for the same or similar circumstances I faced. I decided then to pursue a bill as a corrective measure to statute. Legislative Council staff worked with the Department of Health and they recommended the language amendment you see before you today in SB 2123.

I welcome the committee's review of the bill to see if there are any objections or unintended consequences to this legislation. Thank you for your consideration. I urge your support and now stand for any questions you may have.