

Testimony in Support of SB 2226

Residential End-of-Life Facilities

House Human Services Committee

March 9, 2021 • 2:45 p.m. • Pioneer Room

Bruce Whittey

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Bruce Whittey, and I'm a long-time Bismarck resident.

Today I'm submitting testimony in support of SB 2226 as a person who cares deeply about the community of Bismarck, as well as the entire State of North Dakota. As a senior who has been active in community development, I believe bringing new offerings and services to a community is what is needed to ensure a community thrives. A change in the North Dakota Century Code to create a licensure for residential end-of-life facilities, creating a new option for those who need end-of-life care, seems like common sense to me.

North Dakota is possibly one of the last states to allow residential, homey places where end-of-life patients can spend their final days in comfort, surrounded by family and friends as they receive supportive care from trained providers.

My friend Terry Rockstad's organization, the Rockstad Foundation, has proposed to build one of these residential end-of-life facilities in Bismarck. Under SB 2226, Gaia Home would be licensed by the North Dakota Department of Health.

The creation of Gaia Home would be a huge benefit to the community. Residential end-of-life facilities are an alternative to the current choices of receiving hospice services in a person's home where family has to take on the 24/7 caretaker role; or receiving these services in a non-home setting, such as a hospital. They are designed to combine the comfort of an actual home where people receive hospice services from their chosen hospice provider. The residential end-of-life facility's caregivers provide 24-hour supportive care.

Similarly, residents across North Dakota would also benefit from the existence of residential end-of-life facilities. For those who cannot or do not want to receive care in their homes, and do not want to go to a hospital, these home away from home places provide comfort and dignity at the end of life's road.

Please support SB 2226 to allow residential end-of-life facilities to exist in North Dakota, giving North Dakotans a new option for their care.