

SB 2258:

Hearing of the Senate Human Services Committee, January 26, 2021

Testimony of BoNita J. Morin, Foster Care/Homeless Liaison
Ft. Totten Public School District 30

I strongly support SB 2258, which would eliminate barriers to birth certificates by allowing people experiencing homelessness to get a birth certificate with only one form of ID (that could include a letter from a service provider) and allow unaccompanied homeless youth under 18 to get their own birth certificate. Homeless youth and parents often need basic vital documents like a birth certificate to access employment, education, health, housing, and other needed services.

The current process to get a birth certificate leads to a catch-22: people need a birth certificate to get an ID, and an ID to get a birth certificate. As a liaison assisting students' in obtaining these types of documents; we have completed the required forms as per the agency only to have them returned because there was no ID or Notary signature on the form. How and why does a Notary Public know these student is the first concern; second concern is if a student is unaccompanied with no income – paying the fees to obtain these documents creates an additional hardship; third concern is school districts' do not receive any additional funding for homelessness. SB 2258 will eliminate this problem while adequately protecting against identity theft.

SB 2258 also makes sure that youth who are no longer staying with their parents can access their birth certificates. Insert an example of an unaccompanied youth who has been estranged from a difficult family situation and is on his/her own now. Currently, ND law allows vital records to be issued to individuals who are at least sixteen years old. SB 2258 would ensure this is not a barrier for youth who need a birth certificate to get a job or access education, housing, or other services. Better access to birth certificates will help homeless youth access basic services and benefits, keeping them safer and healthier, which will empower them to access education and employment that can end their homelessness.

I ask you to vote in favor of SB 2258. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at bmorin90@hotmail.com.

Respectfully,

BoNita Morin

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