

SB 2265:

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

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

I strongly support SB 2265, which would allow unaccompanied homeless youth 14 and older to consent for routine health care, including behavioral health care— but not abortion. In the 2018-2019 school year, North Dakota's schools served 285 unaccompanied homeless youth. In our state, these youths are more likely to attempt suicide, more likely to abuse prescription medication and methamphetamines, and less likely to see a dentist. They desperately need access to basic health services and behavioral health treatment. Especially during the pandemic, basic medical care is necessary for youth on their own. As a liaison working with students' on a routine basis; medical care overall is a significant concern as these homeless students' have not had any medical care for over a two-year period and some even longer. Lack of routine medical care leads to other medical issues for this population in general. Unaccompanied youth not being able to access basic health, mental health, or substance abuse services interferes with their daily learning.

Currently, North Dakota law allows youth under age 18 to access only a limited scope of health services: STD and substance abuse treatment, prenatal and pregnancy care, and emergency care. Unaccompanied homeless minors cannot access basic health care (including physicals and dental care), or behavioral health care, without parental consent. These restrictions put youth at risk for serious health consequences, and even death. SB 2265 would remove these barriers, in a narrowly focused way that will only impact the small but very vulnerable population of unaccompanied homeless youth in North Dakota. I am in full support of SB 2265 that will allow this population to access and obtain the much needed services they so rightfully deserve as citizens of the State of North Dakota.

I ask you to vote in favor of SB 2265. Please feel free to contact me with any questions at bmorin90@hotmail.com.

Respectfully,

BoNita Morin

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