

SB 2265

Senate Judiciary Committee

Testimony of Catherine Paquette in support

1-26-2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

I am here today to offer testimony in support of SB 2265, which would create and enact a new section in Chapter 14-10 of the North Dakota Century Code.

I currently intern at Great Plains Food Bank. Most of my work is in affiliation with the Missouri Valley Coalition for Homeless People. I recently became aware that an unaccompanied homeless minor could not receive healthcare if they request such services.

In a recent discussion I had with Beth Larson Steckler, the Program Administrator at ND Department of Instruction, I was made aware that last year, there were 2,697 homeless individuals in North Dakota. Among these individuals, 300 were not in the custody of a legal guardian. Those 300 teenagers have to fend for themselves in every aspect. Many live in cars. Some couch surf from one family's house to another.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs¹ indicates that a human cannot achieve a sense of love, belonging, and achievement until needs that sit lower on the tier are met. These foundational needs include: food, water, shelter, rest, and safety. A human being cannot be expected to thrive if they are not receiving healthcare, a service that they are fundamentally entitled to.

In 1946, the World Health Organization Constitution stated that, "The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being

¹ <https://www.simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.”². Healthcare is a right that every human being deserves to receive.

The graduation rate of homeless youth in North Dakota is currently at 66%. Countless research studies, and namely, the work of Douglas Reeves³, have shown that students are more likely to go to school if they are involved in extracurricular activities. These kids want to attend school. They want to participate in extracurricular, flourish in academia, graduate high school, and contribute to society. It amazes me that over half of homeless teens in North Dakota have obtained a high school diploma.

My own high school and college experiences would not have gone as well as they have if I had not had access to medication and counseling services. I cannot imagine what a homeless teen, having faced more trauma than I can imagine, would survive their high school career without access to counseling or medications to aid their mental health.

I would hope that everyone in this room today wants to put an end to homelessness. To reject a due pass on this bill would affect each homeless individual for the worse and it would result in an increase in the number of homeless students in need of healthcare.

² [who_constitution_en.pdf](#)

³ <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept08/vol66/num01/The-Extracurricular-Advantage.aspx>