

Good morning Madam Chair Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee. My name is Mylynn Tufte and I have the honor to serve North Dakota as the State Health Officer. I would like to provide support for House Bill 1285 which would amend and reenact sections of the ND Century Code related to abandoned infants at certain locations.

I am one example of a life that has been blessed should this law be passed. I was born in Seoul, South Korea, and was an abandoned infant at a police station. Was it my mother, father or a grandparent that decided I might be able to have a better life than the one they could provide? I don't think I'll ever know but I'm grateful for the many opportunities that decision has afforded me for life.

Society norms and culture include traditions that are celebrated and some that we are trying to change. At that time, the Korean patrilineal culture and society stigmatized and discriminated against unwed Korean mothers and their children making it so an unwed mother might not be able to get a job or get a husband. Today, in North Dakota, we have become more open to families of all make-ups. However, we're still battling the shame and stigma that discourages people from getting help for behavioral health conditions and substance use addiction. Infants born under these conditions are some of the most vulnerable citizens and those that we have pledged to protect.

By expanding the options for parents to surrender an infant whether by number of approved locations or intake personnel, infants can be left unharmed and you will have created **more safe places** for those babies whose

mother, father, grandparent have hoped for a better life than the one they were able to provide.

Gratefully, we acknowledge that children being surrendered anonymously isn't a huge issue in North Dakota, but families, communities, and our State will benefit when there is a process in place that the public is aware of and prepared to act upon. Lives can be saved. Resources and time can be focused where needed because we have a plan in place. The anxiety, pain and grief of a tragic event could be avoided.

At the Department of Health, our mission is to improve the length and quality of life for all North Dakotans. Thank you for helping us do this.