



Kayla Schmidt – Interim Executive Director, North Dakota Women's Network
Support – HB1460
North Dakota House Industry, Business and Labor Committee

January 30, 2023

Chair Louser and members of the Industry, Business and Labor Committee,

My name is Kayla Schmidt and I am the Interim Executive Director of the North Dakota Women's Network.

We are a statewide organization working towards improving the lives of North Dakotan women and their families. I am testifying in support of House Bill 1460.

This bill would provide earned benefits that both employers and employees invest in. Investing in programs that attract and retain workers is crucial for North Dakota to build a strong workforce. Employers who offer Paid Family Leave programs report boosts in employee health and wellness, engagement, and performance¹.

For smaller employers, HB1460 would create a means to compete with larger companies who have more resources and are able to offer benefits that attract potential employees. HB1460 is inclusive for workers who have traditionally lacked access to comprehensive benefits: part-time employees, sole proprietors and independent contractors are eligible to participate in this program.

This paid family leave program is optional, allowing employers to decide if it will work for their business. Employers must always consider the best way to attract talent. Flexibility is key for modern working families. HB1460 is pro-family—it defines a wide range of life events and family member relations that are eligible for an employee to request leave.

Workers of my generation need leave to care for their children. Workers of my generation need leave to care for their aging parents and grandparents. It's not uncommon to see grandparents taking on the sole caretaker role for their grandchildren. Mixed, multi-generational families have a variety of needs—for many North Dakotans, a significant event resulting in unpaid leave could result in serious financial hardship.

In North Dakota, over 10,000 babies were born in 2021². Without the availability of paid leave, many women are unable to take the recommended minimum six weeks off work following childbirth. Access to paid family leave gives growing families a sense of security and time to establish and adjust to their new circumstances.

¹ Paid Family Leave in America: An Economic Overview. Society for Human Resource Management. *Oxford Economics*. August 2020.

² ND Vital Events Summary. 2006-2021. *North Dakota Health & Human Services*.