

Testimony
SB 2359 – Department of Human Services
House Human Services Committee
February 27, 2007

Chairman Price and members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Julie Hoffman, Administrator of Adoption Services for the ND Department of Human Services. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for SB 2359. The Department supports a do pass on SB 2359.

SB 2359 was introduced originally at the request of St. Gianna's Maternity Home in Warsaw, ND. Initially the bill proposed changes to language throughout the statute that referred to 'unmarried' mothers. Removing references to 'unmarried' mothers would more accurately reflect the population requesting services at maternity facilities today. These pregnant women may be separated from their husbands, or in difficult marital situations that may involve domestic violence or substance abuse.

At the Senate hearing, the Department provided information to the committee and was asked to draft suggested changes for the bill. The following will explain the changes offered by the Department. These changes have been reviewed with the Chairman and Director of St. Gianna's, the Director of the Perry Center, the Department of Health and the State Fire Marshal. The current version of the bill will allow NDCC 50-19 to more accurately reflect the current business practice of the facilities.

We have removed any references to Maternity Homes providing medical treatment, nursing service or delivery/birthing services. Many years ago, Maternity Homes did have physicians and nurses on staff to deliver babies. Currently, Maternity Homes facilitate residents obtaining health

care services through local physicians, clinics and hospitals. They do not wish to provide medical services or be considered a provider of medical services.

We have extended the time period that a recently delivered mother can seek services at a Maternity Home from two to four months after delivery. This section also allows any resident to reside at the facility for the period of time necessary to meet her needs, as determined by the facility and the mother.

We have added reference to the State Fire Marshal's office (or their designee) in Section 5, consistent with our practice to have each Maternity Home undergo a fire safety inspection during each licensure period.

We have allowed for a possible two-year license (section 2), consistent with our statutory licensure periods for child placing agencies.

The Senate Human Services Committee recommended changes to specific language relating to placing children for adoption in section 10, which are incorporated into the engrossed bill before you.

Initially the Department was neutral in its position on this bill, however, with recommended changes incorporated into the current bill, the Department supports a do pass on SB 2359. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.