

Testimony
House Bill 1124 - Department of Human Services
House Judiciary Committee
Representative Lawrence Klemin, Chairman

January 18, 2021

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee, I am James Knopik, from Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division. I appear today to provide testimony in opposition of House Bill 1124.

During the 65th Legislative Session, the Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division was authorized to certify Minor in Possession (MIP) providers to ensure that the Minor in Possession classes that individuals receive are evidence based. (N.D.C.C. § 50-06-44). This establishes a consistent minimum standard to ensure youth who experience an alcohol-related offense are receiving a quality service that can have a positive impact on their behavior.

Great strides have been made over the past decade in the prevention of underage drinking and related consequences, however alcohol is still the most used substance among North Dakota youth. 22.5 percent of North Dakota middle school students report having used alcohol at some point in their life and 27.6 percent of North Dakota high school students report current alcohol use (within the past 30 days of the survey) according to the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. When individuals under the age of 21 experience their first alcohol-related consequence, evidence-based early intervention strategies have been shown to prevent these youth from developing future substance related problems or developing an alcohol use disorder in the future. Nationwide, among participants who completed the Minor in Possession early intervention education, binge drinking decreased from 69% to 30% and recidivism decreased from 17% to 6% (Beadnell et al., 2016).

The large majority of North Dakota adults, 92.9%, believe that underage drinking is a problem in their community and 73.6% believe prevention programs are a good investment (North Dakota Community Readiness Survey, 2019). The proposed language change in House Bill 1124 will reduce the opportunities to address this issue that has been identified as a concern by North Dakota citizens. Most importantly, the language change will limit the opportunities for youth to access these effective services and opportunities to intervene in the lives of these youth who have experienced an alcohol-related consequence.

There are currently 37 Minor in Possession early intervention certified providers and 452 participants completed the early intervention education course from January 1, 2020 through November 30, 2020. During that same timeframe eight individuals had taken the early intervention class more than once.

This concludes my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions.