

Testimony
House Bill 1124 - Department of Human Services
Senate Judiciary Committee
Senator Diane Larson, Chairman

March 16, 2021

Chairman Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am James Knopik, behavioral health administrator, with the Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division. I appear today to provide testimony in opposition of House Bill 1124.

The Department of Human Services supports Senate Bill 2264 which received a do pass recommendation from this committee, was passed on the floor by the Senate, and now after cross-over will be heard by the House Judiciary Committee tomorrow. Both House Bill 1124 and Senate Bill 2264 seek to accomplish the same goal, changing that an individual who receives a minor alcohol offense "shall" complete an alcohol education class to "may". The Department of Human Services would prefer that this language remain "shall" to ensure that all youth who receive an alcohol offense receive the education necessary to avert additional alcohol offenses and more severe consequences, such as developing an alcohol use disorder later in life.

Based on the passage of each of these bills by both chambers it is evident that the intent is to change the language from "shall" to "may". As a result, the Department of Human Services supports the more robust language outlined in Senate Bill 2264.

Senate Bill 2264 identifies that all youth who receive a second alcohol related offense must complete a minimum of an alcohol education class, and allows individuals who receive a marijuana offense to receive drug education classes.

The Department of Human Services is prepared to begin certifying instructors to provide marijuana education classes. At least one evidence-based marijuana

education program has already been identified by the Department of Human Services, and current certified Minor in Possession Instructors could be easily trained to provide these educational classes. The Department of Human Services has been in contact with the Prevention Research Institute, who created the curriculum of our current Minor in Possession education classes, and they are willing to provide a virtual marijuana education instructor training to North Dakota's current Minor in Possession instructors at no cost.

Due to the Department of Human Services' support of Senate Bill 2264, we urge this committee to make a do not pass recommendation on House Bill 1124. This concludes my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions.