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Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and distinguished members of the Committee on Health and Human Services,

My name is Laurel Libby, and I reside in Auburn. I represent House District 64, which is Minot and part of Auburn. I come before you today to present LD 934 "An Act To Create a Family and Juvenile Mediation Program within the Department of Health and Human Services." This bill establishes a family mediation resource program within the Department of Health and Human Services to support communication and conflict resolution between parents and children as an alternative to mental health services or the court system.

At times, family situations can be complex, and even messy. And sometimes, the issues that families are dealing with don't necessarily fit in the "mental health" category, and aren't appropriate for the court system. So who might a family turn to for help in that situation? The answer to that question is not always clear, and that can leave a family without the resources to address the issues that they are facing. By establishing a family mediation resource program, we can ensure that these families don't fall through the cracks, and hopefully prevent small issues becoming larger ones that might have to utilize mental health services or the court system.

While I am pleased to introduce this bill, I am not the expert on the issue, so would ask to cede the remainder of my time to Elizabeth Shardlow, with whom the idea for this bill originated, and who will be better able to answer any questions you may have.