



GOVERNMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, December 19, 2023
327B Room, State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota

Representative Ben Koppelman, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Members present: Representatives Ben Koppelman, Cole Christensen, Liz Conmy, Karla Rose Hanson, Karen Karls, Lisa Meier, Jeremy Olson, Shannon Roers Jones, Steve Vetter; Senators Randy A. Burckhard, Diane Larson, Tim Mathern, Jim P. Roers

Member absent: Senator Michael Dwyer

Others present: Senator Kathy Hogan, Fargo, member of the Legislative Management
See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

It was moved by Senator Larson, seconded by Representative Meier, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the October 4, 2023, meeting be approved as distributed.

STUDY OF HOMELESSNESS AND BARRIERS TO HOUSING

Mr. Alex J. Cronquist, Senior Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Council, presented a memorandum entitled [Study of Homelessness and Barriers to Housing - Background Memorandum](#).

Ms. Jennifer Henderson, Planning and Housing Development Director, Housing Finance Agency, provided information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding homelessness and housing needs in the state, the continuum of care program, the emergency solutions grant, and the homeless grant program. She noted the continuum of care and emergency solutions grant programs use federal funds and the homeless grant program uses state funds. She noted approximately 5,000 individuals access homelessness services annually in the state.

In response to a question from a committee member, Ms. Henderson indicated she is hopeful the committee will make recommendations the Housing Finance Agency may support during the 2025 legislative session.

Ms. Lorraine Davis, Chief Executive Officer, NATIVE, Inc., provided information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding Native Americans experiencing homelessness and the state of housing on reservations.

Ms. Angela Buckley-Tochek, Bismarck, commented regarding her experience with homelessness.

Ms. Jen Withers, Educational Improvement and Support Assistant Director, Department of Public Instruction, provided information ([Appendix D](#)) regarding children identified as housing insecure in the state.

Mr. Mark Heinert, YouthWorks, provided information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding unaccompanied youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Raquel Doll, Licensed Social Worker, Ministry on the Margins, provided information ([Appendix F](#)) regarding homelessness in the state.

Mr. Brian Cassiday, Founder, Seeds of Eden, commented regarding homelessness in the state.

Ms. Jessica Sloan, Facility and Resource Manager, Dream Center, commented regarding homelessness in the state.

Mr. Patrick McKee, Bismarck, commented regarding his experience with homelessness.

Mr. Adam Anderson, Deputy Director of Transitional Planning, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, provided information ([Appendix G](#)) regarding individuals on supervision who have been identified as experiencing homelessness.

Mr. Darris Grant, Bismarck, commented regarding his experience with homelessness and his work at Seeds of Eden.

Ms. Andrea Olson, Executive Director, Community Action Partnership of North Dakota, provided information ([Appendix H](#)) regarding veterans experiencing homelessness.

Chairman Koppelman suggested the child support division of the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the judicial branch may be asked to provide information to the committee regarding consideration of housing costs when determining child support amounts, including the payment of amounts in arrears.

In response to a question from committee members, Ms. Olson noted she would provide the committee with additional data regarding the length of term of assistance for veterans experiencing homelessness.

Ms. Katie Jo Armbrust, Project Director, Grand Forks Housing Authority, provided information ([Appendix I](#)) regarding the role of public housing authorities and the number of affordable housing units in the state.

Ms. Jessica Thomasson, Executive Director, Human Services Division, North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, provided information ([Appendix J](#)) regarding homelessness in the state and programs available to assist individuals experiencing homelessness. She noted programs administered by DHHS to assist people experiencing homelessness include North Dakota Rent Help, permanent supportive housing service grants, and the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness grant. She noted 2 percent of the state's population experienced a severe housing crisis in the past 2 years.

Information ([Appendix K](#)) was submitted by the Fargo-Moorhead Coalition to End Homelessness regarding regional approaches to address homelessness, including coordination of resources and the challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Ms. Debra Bertam, Director of Community Housing, F5 Project, provided information ([Appendix L](#)) regarding homelessness in the state, including services provided by the F5 Project.

Mr. Rob Swiers, Executive Director, New Life Center, provided information ([Appendix M](#)) regarding homelessness in the state, including services provided by the New Life Center.

Chairman Koppelman suggested the committee may have representatives of local law enforcement agencies present at a future meeting regarding homelessness in the state.

Pastor David Vernoy, Founder and Ministry Director, Redemption Road Ministries, provided information ([Appendix N](#)) regarding homelessness in the state, including services provided by Redemption Road Ministries.

Ms. Erin Oban, State Director, United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development, provided information ([Appendix O](#)) regarding rural homelessness in the state, including programs available to assist rural residents with housing.

Mr. Nathan Svihovec, Commissioner of Labor, North Dakota Department of Labor and Human Rights, provided information ([Appendix P](#)) regarding housing discrimination and other legal resources available to tenants in the state.

Ms. Carel Two-Eagle, Presiding Bishop, Church of the Helping Hand, provided testimony ([Appendix Q](#)) regarding homelessness in the state.

Sister Kathleen Atkinson, Director, Ministry on the Margins, submitted testimony ([Appendix R](#)) regarding homelessness in the state.

A committee member suggested the committee receive additional information regarding North Dakota Rent Help from DHHS, including the number of participating property owners and the timeliness of payments. The committee

member suggested a uniform point of entry be established for individuals experiencing homelessness.

VETERANS HOME STRATEGIC PLAN

Mr. Vernon Laning, Chairman, Administrative Committee on Veterans Affairs, commented regarding the status of the Veterans' Home strategic plan. He noted the strategic plan is not complete.

STUDY OF ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Cronquist presented a memorandum entitled [Study of Accessible Transportation - Background Memorandum](#).

Mr. Chad Orn, Deputy Director for Planning, Department of Transportation, provided information ([Appendix S](#)) regarding funding for accessible transportation. He noted 31 transit providers are operating in the state, providing transportation services in all 53 counties.

Ms. Jill Hough, Program Director, Small Urban and Rural Center on Mobility, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, provided information ([Appendix T](#)) regarding research on transportation accessibility. She noted a survey conducted by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) identified 24 percent of rural transit riders are age 80 or older and nearly 50 percent have a disability.

Ms. Sargianna Wutzke, Lead Operations Officer, Community Options, provided information ([Appendix U](#)) regarding accessible transportation in the state, including potential changes or enhancements. She noted hours of transit availability could be extended and scheduling could be streamlined.

Chairman Koppelman suggested the committee receive additional information regarding the goals of public transit in the state.

Ms. Kirsten Dvorak, Executive Director, Arc of North Dakota, provided information ([Appendix V](#)) regarding accessible transportation in the state, including potential changes or enhancements.

In response to a question from Chairman Koppelman, Ms. Dvorak suggested the state increase funding for paratransit and door-to-door transportation to improve accessibility.

Ms. Roxane Romanick, Executive Director, Designer Genes of ND, Inc., provided testimony ([Appendix W](#)) regarding the committee's study of accessible transportation.

A committee member suggested the committee receive information regarding programs or actions taken by other states to improve transportation accessibility.

Chairman Koppelman asked Mr. Cronquist to distribute a report to the committee from (UGPTI) regarding public transit in other states.

No further business appearing, Chairman Koppelman adjourned the meeting at 3:36 p.m.

Alex J. Cronquist
Senior Fiscal Analyst

ATTACH:23