

House Appropriations—Human Resource Division  
Testimony in Opposition to HB 1012

As a 45-year resident of Fargo, employed actively in Downtown Fargo for half of those years, I write in opposition to HB 1012.

In the late 1990's and early 2000's an emerging revitalized Downtown was experiencing acceleration of transient activity to include aggressive panhandling. An informal group, "Street Smart", that included Downtown employers, employees, residents and law enforcement, began meeting monthly to discuss the transient problem in addition to other common concerns. By the mid 2000's, the concept of affordable housing for people coming out of homelessness that included supportive services for mental health, substance abuse and job training began to take shape. "Street Smart" supported and embraced the various concepts, feeling strongly that punitive measures such as arrests and ticketing were a short-term fix, not a long-term solution.

By 2010, Cooper House became a reality and has been a beacon of hope for an underserved population.

Although I am no longer working in Downtown Fargo, I remain committed to and am passionate about the health and well-being of the heart of our community. A reduction in funding for any facet of Cooper House's supportive services will endanger the residents of Cooper House and have a negative impact on existent and emerging activity in Downtown Fargo. I ask the Appropriations Committee to reject the proposed reduction in funding for the Cooper House Project.