

Testimony on HB 1012
Children and Family Services
House Appropriations / Human Resource Division
2021 Legislative Session
January 25, 2021

Chairman Representative Nelson, Vice Chair Representative Kreidt, and members of the House Appropriations, Human Resource Division,

I am giving testimony today to ask you as a committee to restore the \$100,000 to Family Voices of ND, that was cut from the ND DHS budget.

Family Voices has been working with my family since 2016. My daughter was abused, forever changing her life. She is a shaken baby syndrome survivor and has various disabilities. My oldest child has been significantly impacted as a result. I was connected with Family Voices during a time my life was turned upside down.

As a parent with a child with disabilities, you quickly get thrown into a very disconnected and complicated system. You have to continually advocate for the rights of your children yet know what your rights as a parent are. I struggled and was uneducated with this "new normal".

They were there when I needed them, everytime I needed them. With so many of them having walked in similar shoes, it helped me realize I wasn't the only one who struggled. They helped me connect with various agencies within the community, not only for my children but for myself as well. They have been there for their IEPs advocating for fair education, every tearful phone call when I was unsure of my next steps, and everything in between. They taught me more than I could have ever learned on my own.

Without family voices I would not be a strong educated advocate for my children and I would not have the resources I do now that are enhancing our quality of life. Having them there to support our family has helped us in so many different yet important ways. I am so grateful for their program and would not be where I am today without them.

This program has done so much good for so many families and cutting the budget would do more harm than good.

In summary, I ask that the original dollars that were appropriated for Family Voices of ND last biennium be restored.

Sincerely,

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