

HB 1012

Children and Family Services

House Appropriations / Human Resource Division

January 22, 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.

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." {Fred Rogers}
I am one of the many parents that is incredibly thankful for the helpers at Family Voices of North Dakota. My oldest daughter has cerebral palsy, and the journey of a special needs parent is not an easy one. There are always questions about her care, how she will transition into adulthood, and how to navigate the complex state system for possible resources. Family Voices provides a constant source of knowledge and advocacy. During the COVID19 crisis, it was them I turned to hoping for help. My daughter is one of many children in this state that does not qualify for a Medicaid waiver or have access to home and community-based services. When schools went to distant learning in the spring and many therapy centers had to shut their doors, the regression we saw in our daughter was so difficult. Not only is she medically high risk, but she also requires a lot of assistance with her daily needs and schoolwork. Our mental health and our jobs were at risk with the constant stress. Family Voices helped our family apply for the Lifespan Respite Grant and receive temporary help. The care and attention to what our family needed was something I will forever be grateful for.

I am also grateful for the trainings that I have taken with Family Voices. In 2017 I was fortunate enough to be selected for their Parent Leadership Institute. I was able to make wonderful connections, learn more about programs in our state, and most importantly I learned how to become a better advocate for my child. Since then, I have gained the confidence to join the board of a local non-profit and serve as a volunteer with several others. I have attended numerous other training calls they have provided, and each one provides me with a better understanding of how to become the best advocate for my child and children like her.

In the last biennium \$100,000 was approved for Family Voices to help provide care coordination and training for families like mine. Those funds provide for many families throughout our state. Please restore these funds. It is imperative, especially during our current crisis, that these families have continued access to the assistance that Family Voices of ND provides.

Thank you so much for your time,

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