

A written opening statement on testimony to the North Dakota Special Ed Legislature

Good afternoon ladies and Gentlemen of the 2021 North Dakota Legislature. My Name is Peter Donald Gravdahl, and I would like to talk to you all about the Adult-Student Transitional Educational Program and how it is be beneficial for individuals with disabilities.

In the spring of 2012, before I graduated from Northwood High School in the class of 2012, I was contacted by my caseworker Mary Stammen, about A-Step, I did not know what it was so Mary told me it was a transitional program for people with disabilities. After reviewing the materials, that were sent to me from The Offices of the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities, I knew that this was the right fit.

So in the fall, after graduation, I was brought to Minot where I was settled in, and during my first few months, I learned and acquired experience with support from various teachers, supervisors, case workers, and mentors and other classmates.

A-Step employs mentors to accompany their students to the classes, to observe, make sure that they are focused on coursework, and getting through without problems. They also are to be your friends and help you blend in with the environment of a post-secondary environment.

I admit that I learned and experienced a lot of new stuff such as independent living skills, work skills such as being able to develop an exceptional attendance record at classes and to this day at my current jobs, develop friendships with many students who were from multiple US states and overseas countries, most of whom I continue to this day, and being able to develop a suitable work and social ethic.

I also admit that as my time at A-Step in Minot was positive, I admit that I did make mistakes that I admit were wrong, but with their help and support, I was able to learn from my mistakes, and keep moving forward and not going back to the past.

After doing 2 more semesters, one that was in Minot and my final semester that was online back home in Northwood, I graduated from Minot State/DCB-Bottineau in the class of May 2015 with a 2 year reception services certificate.

Since completing A-Step in May 2014 and graduating from Minot in the Class of May 2015, I have been working current jobs, at a Hotel in Grand Forks since 2016, assisting my Dad Charles with farm work from time to time, and also at Harbor Freight in Grand Forks.

Thanks to A-Step, I have developed a stronger work ethic at my jobs, developing a more deeper strength to learn on the job and take responsibility. For transitioning from High school life to the adult life, I do believe that A-Step can be THE NEXT STEP for First stage adult life transitioning. Thank you.