

**Support Testimony
House Bill 1104
House Judiciary Committee
January 12, 2021**

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee, my name is Ruth Buffalo, District 27, House Representative. Since the last legislative session, I have been consistently contacted by constituents regarding the 85% rule. I have heard numerous personal accounts of first time offenders who were intoxicated with drugs and alcohol, many of whom came to North Dakota to work in the oil fields. One story comes to mind, a first-time offender, didn't know what kind of drugs they were given, blacked out and physically assaulted someone. In the last legislative session, I did vote against this bill, I am an advocate for violence prevention, however, after learning more about individuals' personal stories, I felt compelled to do more research. What I have learned is this, here in North Dakota, we are struggling to help the people who need help the most. We are lacking in adequate funding for access to behavioral health services in a timely manner. Everyone deserves to receive the help they need when they need it. Everyone. We must do better. I do not believe incarceration is the answer, many return from behind bars emotionally scarred for life based off the trauma they face behind bars. Everyone deserves a second chance and quite honestly we are failing the individuals who need the help the most. We need adequate funding to access behavioral health services to help people who need it the most.

Thank you for your time.