

Testimony
House Bill 1012
Development Homes, Inc. by Scott Anderson
Senate Appropriations – Hon. Ray Holmberg, Chairman
March 11, 2021

Good afternoon Chairman Holmberg and other distinguished Committee members;

My name is Scott Anderson, Program Service Director for Development Homes, Inc. (DHI) from Grand Forks, ND. I am honored and grateful to have his opportunity to speak with you on behalf of DHI, other ND Community Providers, and all the people we serve and support. The focus of my testimony will be to speak to the importance of the quality support and services we as Community Providers do each and every day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. We are fortunate to have the opportunity to serve and support others in the great state of ND.

Development Homes, Inc.(DHI) was established in 1974 supporting children and 46 years later we continue to serve children, along with adults and families as well. Our mission: "Development Homes, Inc. is committed to the provision of quality community based support services to person with disabilities, enabling them to maximize their individual potential, and fulfill their personal dreams.". DHI provides a variety of services to about 170 unique individuals and we employ about 500 staff. DHI is currently the 8th largest employer in our Grand Forks community. The people we support, our organization and our staff, have a significant financial impact on our community. With the continued support from this legislature, DHI and every other provider will continue to provide opportunities for people to have the quality lives that we all aspire to have.

In March of 2020, the impact COVID-19 In ND reached a level that impacted each and every community across the state. Our schools were closed to all in-school education and the all too familiar term of "distance learning" was established and implemented. For all parents and those providers who support children, of which DHI is one, the impact was immediate and without precedent. The announcement was made on March 15, 2020 that kids would not be going to their school building for education starting the very next day, March 16, 2020. The determination and dedication of parents and providers to forge ahead with providing immediate educational support to our children was remarkable. At DHI, we were supporting 12 kids in placements living outside the family home. Most of the kids we support in that environment are in need of significant staff support, with most receiving a staff designated to support each child individually. The needed support, just within DHI, would be 10-12 staff working an additional eight(8) hours per day, five(5) days per week for the next 11 weeks. This totals approximately 4,000 to 5000 hours of unscheduled staffing time and the task of providing that support started the very next day. Several other providers across the state were also thrust into "stepping up" immediately to support many children during daytime, school hours. With the very common and prevalent "can-do" attitude, providers across the state were able to meet this challenge and provide the needed support for our kids. This event truly exemplifies the caring and quality of the organizations ND has providing services to people with disabilities. And one more lingering issue, not one provider has been given a dime of reimbursement for providing this support to our kids over these 11 weeks from March 16, 2020 through May 28, 2020. For providers in the state of ND, it is about the quality of services and being there

hospital) cannot admit this person as we are not equipped to handle them as they are just too violent." In an ironic twist, soon after they say that, they discharge the person and say that they are calm enough to return to their home. This is not just a DHI or Grand Forks issue. Providers across our state can tell you very similar stories about the frustration of taking on people with significant challenges, without adequate community support from others to assist the person in being successful in their community. As you are all well aware the behavioral and mental health support systems in ND, as well as in our country, are overwhelmed and under-staffed. There are more people in need of this type of support than there is support available. If providers are going to be successful with reducing the number of people at LSTC. We are going to need to be fully-funded to provide the support needed, creative with our approaches (like our own response teams), collaborative with LSTC and our home regions, and have adequate and responsive community support and services that will be of assistance when that assistance is needed most. The net result of not having the supports and resources needed, is a failed placement. When we are working to help those who pose the greatest need, efficient is important but quality is essential. Success means allowing people to thrive in an environment where we learn and grow every day. When people are able to maximize their full potential and live the life they dream of, that is definitely success!

I want to thank each of you for your time and attention today. It has been an honor and privilege to have this opportunity to share on behalf of Development Homes, Inc. as well as the many wonderful and dedicated providers in the great state of North Dakota.

Respectfully,

Scott Anderson, Program Services Director
Development Homes, Inc.