

**Testimony
House Bill 1012
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
Senator Dick Dever, Chairman
March 31, 2021**

Chairman Dever, members of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, I am Rachel Allison, a Foster Parent with Nexus-PATH in Minot, ND. Nexus-PATH is a member of Nexus Family Healing, providing child welfare and behavioral health services in ND. I am providing this testimony on HB 1012, and asking for delayed implementation of equalized Targeted Case Management (TCM) rates. This will ensure uninterrupted services for some of the most vulnerable children in our state.

I have been a foster parent with Nexus-PATH for the last 5 years. Over that time, I have worked with many children and their families. I have experienced the changing treatment needs of these children as well. We are being informed as the child welfare system changes and progresses in the state of North Dakota and we are working hard to provide our services where they are needed.

When a youth is placed in foster care with Nexus-PATH, there are many supports we as foster parents require due to the treatment needs the kids present. As foster parents, we rely heavily on our Nexus-PATH case managers for these supports. Not only do they help with the placement of the youth in our home, but they are aiding in the placement of this youth in a community. The case managers are often working to connect these youth with school districts, to connect them with medical and mental health services, to arrange family reunification activities such as visits, and to make sure they are receiving any and all services necessary for their treatment. The case managers are also providing support to us as foster parents by being available 24/7 for any emergency situations, helping us to arrange respite care so that we are able to attend trainings or just rejuvenate so we

can continue with our important work, as well as helping us stay current with all foster parent licensing requirements.

I understand that in mid-December of 2020, our agency received notification from DHS Medical Services Division that an equalization of rates was included in the Department's budget as submitted, and that equalizing all rates might have an impact on services we provide. I am here to tell you that the economic impact our agency would have would significantly impact the types of services I as a foster parent could provide. Our case managers would not be able to provide the level of services we have grown accustomed to if they were to be stretched thinner due to more demands, such as higher caseloads, which could be what Nexus-PATH has to do to respond to the lower TCM rate.

In addition, this comes at a time when the child welfare system is asking us to provide more intensive services in foster care, which isn't possible at a lower cost. As foster parents, we are always aware of the many youth awaiting placement in a Nexus-PATH home. Many of us look at foster parent recruitment as part of our calling, as we know more of us are always needed. I fear that if the support starts to look different, we could risk the retention of the homes we already have, meaning the youth would wait even longer for the services they need.

I am here to support the request of Nexus-PATH that your committee consider an amendment to HB1012 to delay implementation of the new lowered rate for a one-year period, to allow Nexus-PATH the opportunity to adjust its services in a way that will not negatively affect the services we provide or the retention of foster parents and staff.

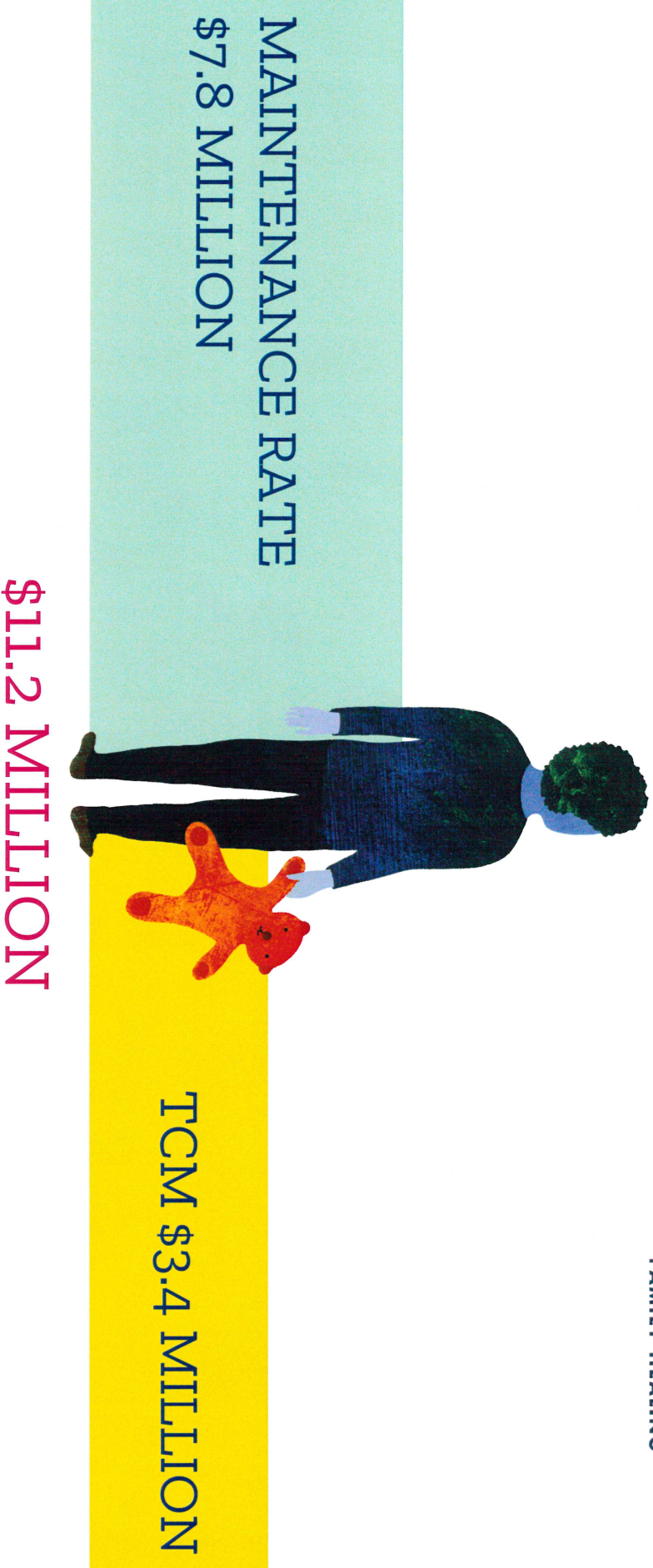
Thank you for consideration of this request.



Nexus-PATH
FAMILY HEALING

Treatment Foster Care

CURRENT STATE



-
- 2020 • 291 monthly average number of foster homes • 324 youth served
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Treatment Foster Care

PROPOSED



MAINTENANCE RATE
\$7.8 MILLION

46% decrease

TCM \$1.2 MILLION

\$9,055,898

IMPACT ●

- Increase in the number of children our case workers are assigned to serve.
- Fewer supervisors to support social workers.
- Less resources to recruit new foster parents.
- Less resources to train and support current foster parents.

The foster parents below provided permission to list their name, address, email, and telephone number in support of this testimony and welcome questions you may have regarding their needs in order to maintain their service provision.

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