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Testimony of Support Senate Bill 1014
Senate Appropriations Committee, Human Resources Division
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Chairman Holmberg and members of the committee, my name is Kirsten Dvorak. I am the Arc North Dakota executive director, and I represent six Arc chapters within North Dakota, which include: Bismarck, Bowman, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Valley City. Our mission is to improve people's quality of life with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively support their full inclusion and participation in the community.

The Arc of North Dakota is a strong supporter of the North Dakota Protection and Advocacy Project (P&A). P&A, in its entirety, works towards achieving positive outcomes for people with disabilities in all aspects of life. Acting in the best interest of individuals with disabilities guides their daily activities and is exemplified in their services.

As an agency, The Arc provides referrals to businesses, families, and most importantly, individuals with disabilities. Often, I refer individuals to P&A for further information or consulting on legal and civil rights issues. Regardless of the cases, self-advocates have always given positive feedback about the helpful and professional service they receive when working with P&A. I have on more than one occasion called on P&A to answer questions about services legal issues and have always been greeted with friendly staff that provides quality information. P&A's services are necessary for many individuals with disabilities in our state. P&A gives a voice to a population of individuals that are not always being heard.

Another instance of P&A's quality work is in the organization of the Legislative Working Group. By managing and facilitating these groups, they have allowed people of all abilities around the state to take action when it comes to disability-related issues and encourages people with disabilities to become active citizens. This group is a forum for education, information exchange, and action. I know of many advocates and professionals who have been inspired and encouraged to speak up because of P&A's support. P&A fosters positive change in the lives of people with disabilities.

Finally, The Arc has had the privilege of collaborating with P&A on an infinite number of projects. These have included community education workshops and events with mental health, employment, and self-advocacy. The Arc of North Dakota believes that P&A is a vital agency and serves a definite need in North Dakota. P&A's work completed by the staff at P&A is always professional, directed, and friendly aligns with what P&A is doing on a national level.

In closing, I believe P&A's efforts have limited instances of abuse, neglect, and exploitation in our state, all while creating opportunities for people with disabilities. I urge the committee to support 1014. Thank you for your time and attention.