

HB1043  
House Human Services Committee  
Rep Weisz Chair

Representative Weisz and Members of the Committee,

My name is Donene Feist and I am the Director for Family Voices of North Dakota. Our work as you know, includes working with families who have children and youth with disabilities and chronic health conditions.

We stand today in support of HB 1043. We hear from families on a regular basis, the lack of inpatient supports for psychiatric residential treatment facility for children.

In many instances, we have assisted families in locating a facility that would take their child. We have also heard from emergency room administration on how children are held in ER's as there are no beds, straining hospital infrastructure. There is a high need for behavioral health care for children, with often nowhere to go.

Recently, a family contacted us who needed to place their child/youth into a facility for stabilization and med changes. We called every hospital facility in the state and at that time there were no beds. As the youth had been very destructive and unable to stay within the home, the only option was to have him charged and placed in jail.

This is not a helpful option to the youth, family or the community.

Hence in addition to the changes set forth in this bill, there also needs to be an evaluation of the increase of need in inpatient care for children and youth. While we would love home and community based services for these children, there is just not enough access for families in dire need. Hence what are families to do? Some are having to garnish custody in order to get help. This is not a viable option and shouldn't have to be.

Additionally, in the height of Covid, a young youth had made a suicide attempt was inpatient at a hospital but when screened Covid positive was discharged immediately. The only place for her to go was to her grandparents which exposed

them to Covid as well. So not only did this young woman not receive the needed treatment, she also was dismissed as she had Covid and exposed all. Scenarios like these are never good.

Please pass HB 1043, let's protect our children, youth and families.

Donene Feist

Family Voices of ND

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