



PROTECTION & ADVOCACY PROJECT

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**Senate Finance and Taxation Committee
House Bill 1244
March 8, 2023**

Chairman Kannianen and members of the Senate Finance and Taxation Committee, my name is Daniel Gulya and I am an attorney with the Projection & Advocacy Project (P&A). P&A protects the human, civil, and legal rights of people with disabilities. The agency's programs and services seek to make positive changes for people with disabilities where we live, learn, work, and play.

The tax credit this bill offers to employers would be a valuable tool for increasing employment for persons with more significant disabilities, which is a top priority for programs serving these persons and a wise fiscal choice for the use of state funds.

P&A has two employment programs. The Protection & Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) program works with social security beneficiaries to resolve barriers to employment and increase employment opportunities. The Client Assistance Program (CAP)

provides assistance in informing and advising client applicants of available benefits under the Rehabilitation Act, and assists and advocates for clients and client applicants in their relationships with projects, programs and services provided under this Act, including Vocational Rehabilitation. The Vocational Rehabilitation division would be well qualified to determine who has a most significant disability and requires customized employment or supportive employment to obtain competitive integrated employment.

Increasing the tax credit to support employment opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities and severe mental illness will benefit employers, and assist with the workforce shortage in our state. Employment can bring these persons with disabilities out of poverty and reduce their reliance on Social Security and other programs that provide financial assistance.

I respectfully request support for HB 1244. Thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at danigulya@nd.gov or by phone at P&A, (701) 328-3946.