

March 3, 2025

HB 2096 Testimony in Support

Dear Chairman Dever and the members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

I urge a "Do Pass" on HB 2096.

Psychiatric treatment for North Dakotans is desperately needed in our state. Living in Fargo, my family and I have the advantage of services being more available due to our larger population. Accessing psychiatric services and treatment when they are needed are required for our residents to be safe. Living in the more rural parts of North Dakota makes mental health care far less accessible and when there are mental health emergencies, care must be immediately available by trained professionals.

SB 2096 offers much needed services by establishing hospitals in four areas of North Dakota cities. These services will bring the needed care and improve the chance for the healthy outcome of our residents who need these services. Many have died due to the lack of psychiatric services in our state. Mental health issues are prevalent in our homeless, elderly, and youth populations. Since the pandemic, mental health care is needed more than ever and the shortage of professionals who can treat serious psychiatric issues and facilities that can provide in-patient treatment is very concerning.

My experience of working with young people who need psychiatric care is in the school setting of a psychiatric facility. There are only six of these facilities in North Dakota with very limited beds and other than addiction treatment centers, there are few, if any, facilities that offer psychiatric care to adults. Family members have experienced the need for intense psychiatric inpatient treatment. Having to go far from home to find services is devastating and expensive and creates additional stress which can adversely affect the outcome. Not finding services can be deadly.

I ask you to vote YES on SB 2096. The health of our citizens is a top priority!

Thank you for your consideration,  
Karen S. Eriksmoen, Fargo