

## **House Appropriations – Human Resources Committee**

Testimony on House Bill 1012

Representative Jon O. Nelson – Chairman

January 25, 2021

Chairman Nelson and members of the House Appropriations – Human Resources Division Committee, my name is Donna Byzewski and I am the Program Director of the corporate guardianship program at Catholic Charities North Dakota. I am respectfully asking your committee to approve funding as detailed in the Developmental Disabilities Division budget for corporate guardianship services for people with intellectual disabilities. To continue providing quality services to meet the needs of current and future clients, we respectfully ask for a cost of living increase of 3% for the first year of the biennium and 3% for the second year.

The court appoints a guardian when a person's capacity to make decisions is compromised and he or she is at risk of neglect, abuse and exploitation. It is important to note that many adults with intellectual disabilities are their own decision maker. However, there are critical times when the person may need the services of a guardian, and if no one else is available or appropriate, a corporate guardianship is a necessity. Corporate guardianship is the guardian of last resort. Our contract specifies that Catholic Charities ND can only accept referrals from Developmental Disabilities Program Managers from the regional human service centers in North Dakota.

In the past 18 months, we have admitted 61 individuals to our program. We have made great strides reducing our waiting list for services. One year ago, our waiting list was at an all-time high of 126 people and our current list has the names of 92 persons. The reduction is primarily due to the additional legislative funding we received for 20 new slots/openings on 7/1/19. This has had a tremendous impact on the lives of people who were on the waiting list and I sincerely thank you for making this happen!

Our request for the next biennium is as follows:

7/1/21 to 6/30/22	489 wards x \$8.37 x 365 days = \$1,493,919 489 wards x \$0.25 (3% COL) x 365 days = \$44,621	\$1,538,540
7/1/22 to 6/30/23	489 wards x \$8.62 x 365 days = \$1,538,540 489 wards x \$0.26 (3% COL) x 365 days = \$46,406	\$1,584,946
7/1/21 to 6/30/23	Petitioning costs	\$89,555
	<b>Total for FY 2021 &amp; FY 2022</b>	<b>\$3,213,041</b>

The request that we are submitting is bare bones, allowing us the capacity to meet the needs of 489 wards during the next biennium. We realize that the Department of Human Services' budget is tight but the requested funding will help assure that we have the staff and resources to meet the critical health and safety needs of the individuals we serve. Thank you for the opportunity to stand before you today and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.