

January 12, 2021

Good afternoon, Chairman Nelson and members of the committee,

My name is Taylor Restad, I work for the Grand Forks Housing Authority as the Program Director at LaGrave on First. I am here to respectfully request \$515,000 be included in Field Services - Northeast Human Service Center's budget in House Bill 1012 to fund the 24/7 housing support staff at LaGrave on First in Grand Forks.

During the last session, \$375,000 was included in SB 2012 for our Housing Support Specialists at LaGrave on First, a permanent supportive housing project for people in the Grand Forks region who have experienced chronic homelessness. The funding supports certified Mental Health Technicians for the residents of LaGrave on First. These staff members provide year-round, 24/7 necessary housing supports and monitoring to create and maintain a safe and supportive environment for residents. LaGrave on First is an apartment complex that offers one-bedroom/bathroom units of affordable housing and on-site support services without prerequisites such as sobriety, participation in services, or clean background checks as the program is based on the Housing First approach to ending homelessness. People with behavioral health needs first need a safe, affordable place to live before they can pursue other goals related to their health, well-being and quality of life. By all accounts LaGrave on First has been greatly successful in its mission to provide needed housing and opportunity to our chronic homeless population.

Last session's amount was reduced from our initial request of \$550,000 due to the anticipated approval and implementation of North Dakota's 1915i State Plan Amendment in July of 2020. If approved and implemented as we had anticipated, this amendment would have allowed us to bill Medicaid for the housing services provided by our Housing Support Specialists rather than need a line item in the DHS' budget. DHS submitted the 1915i State Plan Amendment in April of 2020, although it has recently been approved by CMS the ability to begin functionally using it will take time and the amendment does not include daily rates. The Grand Forks Housing Authority has begun the process to become a Medicaid biller in order to take advantage of this funding opportunity. Additionally, while we are grateful that the 1915i State Plan Amendment includes housing support services, as they are key to keeping people housed, we are deeply concerned regarding the maximums of 156 hours per year versus inclusion of daily rates. To this end, I stand before you requesting \$515,000 be included in House Bill 1012 for LaGrave on First until we have an implemented 1915i State Plan Amendment that includes daily rates.

I appreciate the opportunity to make this request in front of you today, I'll be happy to take any questions.

Sincerely Submitted,  
Taylor Restad