

January 25, 2021

North Dakota House Appropriations Human Resources Sub Committee

Chairman Nelson and Committee Members,

My name is Jeff Herman. I serve as the CEO of Prairie St. John's of Fargo. I am also the Chairman of the Board of Directors for the ND Hospital Association and a past member of the State Mental Health Planning Council.

Prairie St. John's offers a continuum of behavioral health care including acute inpatient hospital care, residential treatment and day hospitalization. Our patients come from throughout North Dakota and Minnesota. We are a part of a network of private and public providers.

I am here to support the \$9 million Substance Use Disorder Voucher increased allocation to the Department of Human Services in HB1012.

Through my 25+ years in behavioral health, I have come to conclude that for persons who suffer from addiction and mental illness, the best outcomes are correlated with; 1. Immediate attention when there is an openness to care on the part of the patient, 2. Care is provided at the level determined by appropriately trained professionals, and 3. A reliable method of payment for services that exist so patients are not further destabilized and that providers stay viable. No person enters our facility without all these considerations being reviewed. The level of care ranges from individual assessment to acute hospital care (as an aside we provided over \$5.5 million dollars of charity care last year).

As you know the allocation that you made last legislative session served our citizens for only about one year of the biennium. The additional \$9 million will serve to provide evidence as to what is needed and what tweaks we need to make to stabilize the programs in future biennia.

I also understand that in addition to the appropriation, NDDHS needs resources of staff to implement the increased voucher funding. The investment will prevent pain and suffering and is prudent to prevent clogging up our emergency rooms, courts, and prisons systems.

Thank you. Jeffrey A. Herman, MBA, RN