

Testimony for Senate HB 1012

Senate Human Services Committee

January 26, 2021

Chairman Nelson and members of the House Human Resource Division of the Appropriation Committee, I am Steven Reiser, Director of Dakota Central Human Service Zone. I am also a member of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Association. Please accept this testimony in favor of HB 1012.

The counties of McLean, Mercer, Oliver and Sheridan formed a social service district in 2006 and started operating as district on January 1, 2007. The mission of the district was to provide a better service to the county residents and when possible lower costs. In 2007 Dakota Central employed 36 staff. At the end of 2019 Dakota Central employed 31 staff. There can be cost savings and efficiencies found when counties join together but it takes time. Even though caseloads have grown from 2007 Dakota Central is able to employ fewer staff. If you look at 2020 staff numbers Dakota Central is down to 25 staff because of 4 staff transferring to state employment and reducing two more staff.

Zones have done a lot in one year and are working hard to improve services and find efficiencies but there has to be financial stability to the achieve kind of improvements we all hope for.

I support the amendments that the Department of Human Services has proposed. Using all of the reserve funds that zones have now to replace the dollars that the zone budget is short for the last biennium and not fully funding zones this biennium could cause a reduction in service and make good thoughtful cost savings very difficult.

Zones want to improve the services they provide at the grass roots level and they are willing to work together to be more efficient in this delivery. They need the funding requested by the Department of Human Services to make it happen.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and I would answer any questions you might have.