

House Bill 1354
Human Services Committee
Testimony by Audrey Uhrich, Program Director,
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February 2, 2021

Chairman Wiesz and members of the Human Services Committee, I am Audrey Uhrich. I am the Program Director for Guardian and Protective Services, a non-profit agency that is appointed by the court to serve as a guardian for vulnerable adults.

Our State is facing challenges in guardianship services. There is a great need for well-qualified guardianship providers to assist vulnerable adults by serving as guardian. A Guardianship Commission, as laid out in this bill, is a great step towards strengthening guardianship in North Dakota and ensuring that guardians are well-trained, available, and held accountable for the services they provide.

Guardian and Protective Services and other public guardian agencies across the State welcome the opportunity to help more individuals in need of a guardian. Our agency currently has 19 individuals on our wait list in need of a guardian. The number of people needing assistance continues to increase. As fast as we can respond, more individuals are referred to us - in January alone we added 9 people to our wait list. It is our hope that the Guardianship Commission can set the foundation to streamline availability of guardianship providers and develop a strong reimbursement process to ensure that all guardianship providers have enough staff available to meet the growing demand for guardianship services.

Guardians are an essential piece in the continuum of care for vulnerable adults. Please ensure that our state addresses this important need by approving this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.