

House Bill 1012
Appropriations – Human Resources Division
Senate Appropriations
Chairman: Senator Ray Holmberg
March 9, 2021

Written Testimony submitted by: Keith J. Hunke, Bismarck City Administrator

Burleigh County Housing Authority has partnered with Beyond Shelter, Inc. in Fargo to develop a permanent supporting housing project for the homeless in Bismarck called Edwinton Place. It is located at 1121 S. 11th Street, Bismarck just south of Cash Wise on Bismarck Expressway. This project has 40 – one bedroom apartments. This project was developed under the Federal Housing First model. Most of the Edwinton Place tenants have come from homeless situations and are dealing with mental illness and/or drug/alcohol addictions and are in need of supportive services.

Edwinton Place has been open for just over one year, serving 45 individuals during that time. Persons identifying as having a disabling condition due to mental health is 74% and alcohol and drug abuse is 76%. Edwinton Place has been very beneficial for the Bismarck Police Department serving a population that had frequent interactions with law enforcement in the past. Edwinton Place contracts with the Dacotah Foundation to provide 24/7 Housing Support Specialist staff. They are Mental Health Technicians, certified by DHS, and they provide year-around 24/7 front door coverage, as well as the necessary tenancy supports and interventions to create and maintain a safe and supportive environment for tenants. They screen visitors, track tenants coming and going, establish limits and monitor alcohol being brought in, do wellness checks if they haven't been seen each day, engage with tenants and give staff updates on behaviors that may need some attention, de-escalate situations when they can and call for back up when they need it. Services provided by Dacotah foundation at Edwinton Place have greatly reduced the need for any involvement of the Bismarck Police Department with tenants of Edwinton Place.

In addition to the 24/7 support, Edwinton Place also provides space for support services to come in such as West Central Human Services, Housing and Employment Specialists from Community Options, Sanford Health provides case management and assists the tenants in accessing and maintaining health insurance. On-site staff coordinate food bank drop offs from Great Plains Food Bank and meals on wheels.

Edwinton Place is housing for tenants that are similar to the ones that live at Cooper House in Fargo and LaGrave on 1st in Grand Forks but Edwinton place has not received funding for 24/7 front door service. Edwinton Place also expected that the Medicare provision of section 1915i, which you passed last legislative session, would be available to cover these qualified costs. At this time the funds are still not available.

I oppose HB1012 as it currently is written as it does not include funding for the much needed 24/7 front door coverage and additional service supports required for the ongoing success of Edwinton Place. I respectfully request that you include the \$640,000 for these service supports for Edwinton Place.

Thank you for your time and support. This funding investment provided in HB 1012 truly helps those most in need and the most vulnerable of our States population.