

HB 1012 Testimony
Senate Appropriation Committee
Senator Ray Holmberg, Chairman
March 10, 2021

Good afternoon Chairman Holmberg and Members of the Committee. My name is Kimberly Ohlhauser, and this is my husband Troy Ohlhauser. We are from Bismarck, ND living in district 30. We are here to share our story regarding our daughter, Chloe.

Our story started back in October 2014 when our daughter was sexually assaulted. She was 8 years old. She was already diagnosed with ADHD and she had a learning disability in relation to social skills, reading and English.

We have done three residential treatment facilities in ND and UT between 2016 and June 2020. The first residential placement my husband and I had to do a no-fault deprivation and give up custody of our daughter to Burleigh County to get her the help she so needed. After going to the second residential treatment facility, we learned that Chloe has autism and is developmentally disabled, along with PTSD, mood dysregulation disorder, and social issues with family, school, and any person of authority.

For the last six and half years this has impacted not only Chloe but my husband and I as well. We have dealt with being physically assaulted by our daughter, her taking off from the house, threatening self-harm which she has a history of. Stealing our credit cards and shopping online due to poor impulse control and breaking our personal property. Our daughter acts like an addict and always wants that immediate gratification. This is the only way we can describe how she is at times. We have had to deal with many let downs after Chloe has been discharged from the residential treatment facilities without going to a step-down program after her second residential placement and a therapeutic foster home after the third residential placement, none of which happened. My husband and I have been in counselling for our mental health and learning how to cope with a special needs child who also has PTSD which can be exhausting physically, mentally, and emotionally. The best way to describe our situation is most of the time we feel like a hostage in our own home and there is literally nothing we can do about it.

We currently have the following services: Case Management, Developmentally Disability program at West Central, Pride respite, counseling once a week, occupational therapy, and speech therapy weekly. We work closely with her case manager in high school, and she sees a psychiatrist once a month but still this is not enough and does not help us when we are in crisis.

We had PATH for respite care, however, Medicaid will only pay for one year per lifetime. Chloe also has done partial hospitalization at CHI St. Alexius as well.

Between July 2020 and November 2020, we as well as her respite workers at Pride have had to call the police on Chloe at least 20 or more times. We were told by some police officers that they cannot continue to chase after her, pick her up when she takes off from our home. This creates a much bigger problem because if we do not call the police when she takes off from our home, my husband and I could be charged with child neglect due to her diagnosis of being developmentally disabled. Chloe mentally is unable to make good decisions most of the time and she doesn't know her own physical strength when she is angry and emotionally unable to control her impulses.

The police youth bureau has also been involved with Chloe since coming home in June of 2020. Each time my husband and I have had her cited by Bismarck Police Department we receive a letter from the Police Youth Bureau within two to three days stating they are not going to do anything due to it being a mental health issue and to follow up with the programs we are involved with.

We have now reached a point where there is nothing any of the agencies can do for us when we are in crisis, which is not their fault.

When Bismarck had a safe bed my husband and I utilized it when in crisis. When Chloe would go to safe bed for 48-72 hours it gave Chloe a chance to calm down and self-regulate. My husband and I got the rest we needed to recharge from the constant abuse we received from our daughter, off and on, the past six and half years.

The head of psychiatry at CHI St Alexius will no longer admit Chloe to the hospital due to it being behavioral issues.

Youth Works will not let her come there during a crisis due to Chloe needing a higher level of care than they can provide.

We had respite care through PATH which Medicaid will only pay for one year per lifetime. We have exhausted that.

We are going through a vicious cycle like many other families are currently going through.

Our wish is for North Dakota to have safe bed again and extensions of coverage for the PATH support program to assist other families like us while we are in crisis.

It would be more cost effective to have safe bed in place rather than going to the hospital or calling the Police and having them tell us there is nothing they can do and wasting their resources and time.

My husband and I will continue to advocate for the mental health services needed in our state for our children and children's children.

We want to thank you Chairman Holmberg and committee members for your time and patience in letting us share our story.

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