

March 9, 2021

Re: HB 1012

Chairman Holmberg and committee members,

I am disappointed to hear of the proposed plan to discontinue Section 11 supports for individuals with disabilities in North Dakota. As the previous Executive Director of Community Living Services from 1983 through 2019, I supervised the provision of services for approximately 33 of the people with intellectual disabilities that would be denied services if this proposal is enacted. Approximately 20 years ago the Division of Developmental Disabilities proposed the discontinuation of funding for this same group of individuals, arguing that, despite their documented limited intellectual abilities and the great challenges they face in dealing with daily life issues, these people were not disabled enough to require state support. At that time, we provided testimony to the legislature and an agreement was made that the ND Division of Developmental Disabilities would fund 50% of the cost of services for these folks and that service providers would cover the other 50%. Community Living Services has provided that match since that time and, in fact, because the amount being funded by the State of North Dakota has not increased over those 20 years, Community Living Services' share of the costs has risen to 60%-70%.

CLS felt at that time and continues to feel today, that those individuals require some level of support in order to survive in the community. We believe that, without some level of support, these people are at great risk of homelessness, incarceration, or health decline. I have always felt that the type of service provided for these Section 11 people is one of the best, most economical, financially responsible uses of state funding. Generally, these individuals live in their own homes, many have jobs, and most require only help in some specific parts of their lives, like paying bills, following through with health issues, dealing with personal concerns, and maintaining their housing. The costs per individual are very limited and with the providers covering the great percentage of the total costs, the states commitment is minimal.

Our fear, again, is that if supports are terminated, other parts of the system will necessarily be required to step in. These would include housing assistance, the police department and the medical system.

I am requesting that your committee does not support the proposal to discontinue funding for the Section 11 for individuals with disabilities in North Dakota.

James Berglie