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Testimony House Bill 1012
Senate Appropriation
March 11, 2021

Chairman Holmberg and members of the Committee, my name is Kirsten Dvorak. I am the executive director of The Arc of North Dakota, which includes all six Arc chapters in North Dakota: Bismarck, Bowman, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Valley City. Our mission is to improve people's quality of life with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively support their full inclusion and community participation.

According to the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) and other federal legislation, "disability is a natural part of the human experience...". Prevention activities do not diminish the value of individuals with intellectual and/or other developmental disabilities (I/DD) but instead strive to maximize independence and enhance people's quality of life with I/DD.

Individuals with intellectual and/or other developmental disabilities deserve the opportunity for a full life in their community where they can live, learn, work, and socialize. To achieve this goal, they need a comprehensive, person-centered and directed, system of appropriate high-quality long-term supports and services (LTSS), a well-trained, fairly compensated workforce of providers, and direct support professionals.

The quality and effectiveness of LTSS for people with I/DD depends upon qualified providers of supports and services with adequate skills and training. Inadequate compensation hampers both recruitment and retention of direct support professionals (DSP). Insufficient funding would negatively impact the quality of support available to people with I/DD and the success that individuals have in living the life they choose in the community.



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It has been over 40 years since The Arc of North Dakota began the task of eliminating the state institution at Grafton. In 1980, The Arc was called the ARC, and the Life Skills and Transition Center (LSTC) was named the Grafton State School. When the lawsuit to close San Haven and the Grafton State School was dismissed in 1995, it was with the understanding that the state would continue to work to keep our citizens in their homes and communities. The Arc of North Dakotas' vision of closing LSTC has not changed. The Arc of North Dakota supports the census reduction and is a provider that specializes in crisis and stabilization services. We also support the need for a new state hospital for specialized care, as they cared for 18 clients diagnosed with I/DD in 2020.

However, we have concerns about the decrease in the disability services budget. The reduction would jeopardize the promise of keeping our citizens in the programs to participate fully in their communities, where they experience personal independence. We ask that you reinstate the 11 million dollars of funding. Funding is used for person-centered home and community supports delivered in natural community environments for individuals that don't qualify for waiver services.

I urge you to help us look for answers to a problem that has troubled us well over the 40 years.

Kirsten Dvorak

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