

RE: HB 1012 – Section 11 Developmental Disability Program

Dear Chairman Holmberg and members of the committee,

As a caregiver of a person receiving Developmental Disability Services, I am writing to express my opposition to eliminating Section 11 funding as outlined in HB 1012. This program serves individuals who would otherwise “fall through the cracks” without the support provided by this program.

I have been employed by Community Living Services for over 33 years, providing supports to individuals with disabilities in Fargo. As such, I have had long-standing relationships and understanding of people with disabilities. CLS provides support to 33 of the individuals who would be affected by the elimination of Section 11 services. I can attest to the fact that these individuals definitely require some level of supports in order to live in the community. For example, some the things I assist with include applying for and maintaining benefits, such as Social Security, Housing, Medicaid and SNAP. Without my help, the people I support would like lose their housing and healthcare coverage, and would end up homeless, costing the State and Fargo community even more money. I also serve as Representative Payee for some for their Social Security benefits, which ensures these benefits are used to pay essential bills, such as rent. I often hear from landlords in the area that they wish all of their tenants had such support, as having a payee and a service provider means the rent is paid and they have someone to work with if there are problems. I also assist people to maintain their health. For example, one individual who receives Section 11 was due this summer for her first colonoscopy. She was worried and wanted to complete this, as her mom died from colon cancer, and she understood that her risk of developing colon cancer was higher. However, when she received the instructions for the test prep, she panicked; she did not understand any of it. With my help, she was able to complete the test prep and complete the colonoscopy (she had several polyps removed). Without assistance, she probably would have had to repeat the test several times, costing Medicaid even more money—or possibly the polyps would have been missed and she would have developed cancer. The Section 11 program serves people who have no other options for services, and provides very essential services at a very low cost. The cost to the local community and the State of North Dakota would likely be much higher without these services.

I strongly urge you to continue to fund this program and to provide continuity to those receiving Section 11 supports. Thank you for your continued service to the people of North

Dakota and for your consideration of continuing this service that supports people with disabilities to be as independent as possible in their communities.

Sincerely,

Signature: Janice Brelje

Printed Name: Janice Brelje

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