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Senators,

I write to you today to speak in opposition to the budget for the Department of Health. As written, it would remove funding for the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Clinic at University of North Dakota from the budget.

The primary role of my organization is to support families of children born substance exposed. Removing this funding would be very detrimental to children across the state. Currently estimates are that 1 in 20 children are affected by being substance exposed to either drugs or alcohol in the country. This means that in an average size classroom of 20 to 25 kids, at least one child will have been exposed to drugs or alcohol in the womb.

The period of gestation where brain development occurs is in the first 12 weeks. Some mothers may not know that they are pregnant at this point. If they consume even an ounce or two of alcohol, this can affect the executive function portions of the brain.

The executive function portion of the brain gives us the ability to determine right from wrong. To decide not to do things. To apply logic to situations.

Currently the UND clinic run by Dr. Larry Burd is the only one in the state of North Dakota. There is a program starting later this year that will help identify potential community health centers that might be able to host a clinic, but that program isn't started yet.

On a personal note, my youngest son was born substance exposed. He wasn't diagnosed with FAS until he was 15. Because his IQ was deemed to high, he didn't qualify for Developmental Disability Services. He is 19 currently and a resident of the Burleigh/Morton County Detention Center awaiting trial on multiple felony counts.

He was diagnosed through the UND clinic by Dr. Larry Burd.

Family Services Network, Inc. was formed in 2018 to help families not experience the struggle that our family faced for 19 years, to help their children. Family Services Network, Inc., is the statewide affiliate to the National Organization of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome headquartered in Washington DC.

Please do not pull this funding from the Department Budget.

Thank you

Carl Young