

SB 2015
House Appropriations – Government Operations Division
March 7, 2023
Testimony of Scott Bernstein

Chairman Monson and members of the House Appropriations – Government Operations Division. For the record, my name is Scott Bernstein. I am the Executive Director of Guardian and Protective Services here in Bismarck.

I. Professional Guardianship – We are Court Appointed

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak about Guardianship. By way of a quick reminder, North Dakota Century Code legally gives the Court the option of appointing a guardian to make decisions that the protected person is unable to make. Appointed professional guardians are the guardian of last resort. In other words, the adult protected person is below the poverty line, has limited social support, and no family members or capable friends to assist them.

As professional guardians of last resort, we cover **part of our costs** for providing this service through a reimbursement from the PASS fund...(Public Administrator Support Services). PASS funds are in the OMB budget.

The job description of a guardian is comprehensive and the requisite knowledge to be a legal professional guardian is extensive. In States where State employees provide guardianship, those employees are classified or graded higher due to the complexity and legal implications of their work.

Keep in mind, removing of rights and personal agency is a VERY serious decision. A professional guardian takes the Court's plenary orders, giving the guardian broad authority to make decisions, very seriously. Professional guardians are always balancing AUTONOMY and RESTRICTIONS. Obviously, the safety of the protected person and society is of the utmost importance. However, a professional guardian is always working to include the protected person in the decision making process.

Court appointed professional guardians are YOUR guardians. At this point, the State does not have a Department of Professional Guardianship. Not-for-profit agencies provide your guardianship services across the State. As professional guardians, working on your

behalf, we work diligently every day to preserve the protected person's dignity and serve quietly.

I can unabashedly say, we are much needed. Right now, the State is in a guardianship crisis. At this moment, there are over 125 people that need a professional guardian that sadly, we can't serve. The decision that you have been entrusted to make will determine the direction of guardianship in the State and ability to meet the need.

II. This Decision Determines Destiny of Professional Guardianship

If you are an advocate for small government, then I ask that you listen carefully.

We are standing at a fork on the guardianship road. At this junction you can go either right or left. The right lane will appropriately fund PASS. This allows not-for-profits and professional guardianship to continue providing service to vulnerable adult North Dakotans.

OR

You can take the left lane. So how do you get on the left lane? You take the left lane when you underfund PASS. When PASS is underfunded, not-for-profit agencies, providing your professional guardianship are left with two choices:

- A. Professional guardian services, go away, as some already have OR
- B. We have to reduce the number of PASS clients we accept.

Unfortunately, the left lane comes with significant unintended consequences. The most significant is the formation of a State Department of Public Guardianship...with all the accompanying expenses incurred when running a State Department.

The need for Guardianship doesn't go away. In fact, it only increases. You just decide how vulnerable individuals will receive guardian services.

At this moment 481 protected persons receive professional guardian services through PASS funding (Public Administrator Support Services). The PASS fund has run out of money. Not only that, agencies are running in the red. The legislature authorized an expert to do a study on North Dakota Guardianship. The report was returned in 2012. The expert's conservative advice on funding was not followed. This has created a guardianship crisis.

THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The present model of providing guardianship through not-for-profit agencies is amazing. If for no other reason than the ROI. The return on investment is nearly four times the investment. Four times. For every dollar you put into guardian services you save \$4.00. Let that in.

If I were sitting in your chair I would say: Prove it Bernstein.

No problem.

One man...let's call him Sam.

In one year Sam had 64 visits to the emergency room.

Sam had four hospital stays for a total 12 days of hospitalization.

Sam was arrested six times for disorderly conduct.

Sam spent three days in jail.

Sam faced two charges related to shop lifting.

Obviously, Sam made several court appearances AND required a public defender.

Sam lost his place to live, blew his SS and became a recognized trouble maker at the homeless shelter.

Sam conservatively cost the State \$150,000.

Sam was finally able to get a guardian.

One year later...0 ER visits. 0 hospitalizations. 0 arrests. 0 court appearances. 0 nights in jail. 0 needs for a public defender. He now lives in an efficiency apartment on a rent voucher.

Under our present request for funding, \$8.1 million, the State would pay \$7,200 to provide a professional guardian for the year...saving the State \$117,800.

KEEP IN MIND: The State pays one way or another – you just determine how much you want to pay and who gets the dollars.

Here's another example:

A man was hospitalized in the Fargo Sanford Hospital for NINE months. He didn't have one physical need that made continued hospitalization a necessity. He could have been out in two days but he couldn't be safely discharged. WHY? There were no guardians. Again, this man was hospitalized for NINE months. Professional guardians wanted to help. They couldn't. They were overloaded and the compensation was so low nobody could hire guardians.

Senator Kristin Roers gave this first hand report. She had this man on her floor in the hospital. She testified on the Senate floor that the final bill was \$550,000. If a professional guardian were reimbursed, based on the \$8.1 million, the cost to the State would be \$5,400. The State would have saved \$544,600.

I think it's safe to say, no one can accuse the citizens of the State of North Dakota of being penny pinchers. Why spend less when you can spend more?

The citizens of North Dakota are paying for people to stay in the State Hospital because there are no guardians. North Dakotans are paying for inmates to remain incarcerated. They were eligible for parole two-three years ago...but there are no guardians. Right now there are nearly 100 individuals in nursing homes in need of a guardian.

III. THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE OF UNDER FUNDING

There is the other option. Instead of funding PASS for \$8.1 million the State can pay \$28 million in tangible costs that are never tied back to a 'cause' for that expenditure. The expenditure is caused by underfunding guardianship.

Funding guardianship, with evidenced savings, puts a whole different spin on TAX RELIEF.

1. The conservative projection for PASS guardianship by 2025 is 596 protected persons. I would contend that number is actually low. It is projected that by 2025 16,000 North Dakotans will be diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. If only 5% of those 16,000 North Dakotans need a guardian that will be another 800 individuals.
2. Underfunding will result in not-for-profits reducing guardianships or will close. This will immediately impact the 481 individuals receiving PASS funded guardianship. It could leave over 250 protected persons without a guardian.
3. In light of the guardian crisis, North Dakota is heading toward making the same choice other States made that underfunded not-for-profits providing guardianship. Choosing bigger government.
4. The unintended consequence of underfunding is the formation of a State Department of Public Guardianship to meet the need.
5. Oregon is just one example. Their Department of Public Guardianship has 12 State FTEs. They serve 132 individuals. Their biennium budget is \$4,000,000.
6. Let's do the math. We are requesting \$8.1 million to provide professional guardianship to 596 protected persons. Oregon's State Department of Public Guardianship would need a biennium budget of \$18.1 million dollars to serve 596

protected persons with 54 FTEs. I've had conversations with the Oregon State Director. When he heard that \$8.1 million in PASS funding would cover 596 protected persons he was speechless. He finally broke the silence with, "Well, I guess every State spends their money differently."

In my head I said, "No kidding Sherlock. I believe North Dakotan's are just smarter than Oregonians."

Beyond the dollars, at the end of the day there is a HUGE intangible return on investment.

Guardians become YOUR hands extended to the most vulnerable among us. While others walk by on the other side – which include even family, the Professional Guardian stops, stoops and serves.

70% of our clients suffer from significant mental illness. I never fault a friend or a family for stepping away. These are very challenging people and many we will serve for life. Regardless, they still bear the image of God.

Recently, one of our Guardians had to make a very difficult decision regarding a protected person. The end-of-life decision. While the protected person may not have been the most competent decision maker the guardian tried to explain the realities. The goal is to always involve the protected person in their decisions. It was clear. The individual simply wanted to go – but they had two things they wanted before the left. They wanted watermelon and some slices of canned grapefruit. The guardian knew that when life support was withdrawn this individual would only have minutes. The guardian made the decision to keep the life support in place and ran to the store. They picked up some watermelon and canned grapefruit.

The guardian propped the individual up and fed them a bite of watermelon and slice of canned grapefruit. The last request had been honored. The protected person leaned back and indicated the guardian could leave. The guardian understood. This person had lived such an isolated life they would take their last journey alone. The guardian stepped out of the room and in less than 10 minutes stepped back in and they were gone. The guardian took the gnarled hand and cried. By the way, the guardian took their own time and drove a few hundred miles to attend the simple memorial – that no family attended.

Giving to the most vulnerable conveys dignity. When we lift something to give to another we actually lift ourselves as well. We become more.

My brother, who is a CFO for a company in the Big Government State of Minnesota has been watching this process unfold. Which road will North Dakota take?

He wrote me the other day and said,

“If there is any belief that we have a moral and social responsibility to provide care for the most vulnerable among us, then there is no service more worthy than this service. This service provides care to those who are no longer able to advocate and seek the best care for themselves and defend themselves from being taken advantage of.”

Friends, you have a clear choice. I personally believe I am here for this moment to urge you act with kindness toward the least of these and make a fiscally responsible decision for North Dakotans.

Personally, this is the kind of North Dakota I want to live in and I believe you do too.

I have also submitted along with my testimony a much deeper dive into the financial realities and return on investment. The not-for-profit agency model provides a remarkable return on investment. This is consistently substantiated by studies done on guardianship across the country and right here in North Dakota.

I'll be happy to answer any questions.

Public Guardianship Cost Benefit Analysis Regarding SB 2015

Prepared by Scott Bernstein

Adults under guardianship are among the most vulnerable North Dakotans. They typically have long-term, complex physical and/or mental conditions such as mental illness, dementia, traumatic brain injury, autism or cognitive impairment.

When adults are placed under guardianship by the Court, the Court legally removes some or all of their rights and grants another individual – a family member, friend or Professional Guardian – control over their affairs. Guardians are on duty 24/7, 365 days a year and make potentially life-altering decisions, such as: where the adult lives, the medical or mental health care that they receive, who the adult can have contact with, distribution of financial assets, coverage through benefits and even end of life decisions.

Since 2013, the legislature has appropriated General Funds in the OMB budget for distribution to the private agencies and private individuals that serve as Public Guardians for indigent adults. The resources of the adult served must be less than 100% of poverty and/or are receiving Medicaid-funded services.

The funding appropriated by the legislature is distributed to the Public Guardians as a pass through managed by the North Dakota Association of Counties. The funding is referred to as PASS (Public Administrators Support Services). The NDACo does not receive any remuneration for this service.

STATE FACTS SUMMARY

States Using Agency Guardianships

The States of Washington, Common Wealth of Virginia and Florida use contracted services through not-for-profit agencies, similar to North Dakota, to provide Guardian Services. The States in this summary have a daily per diem rate per client that is significantly higher than North Dakota's \$10.00 per day.

COMMON WEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Two year Cost Benefit Analysis showed a 59% Return on Investment.

STATE OF WASHINGTON

Residential costs per client decreased by \$8,131. The average cost for providing a Public Guardian was \$7,907 per client during the time of the study.

Personal care decreased by an average of 29 hours per month for Public Guardianship clients, compared to an increase in care hours for similar clients without a Public Guardian.

Total savings to the State exceeded program costs.

FLORIDA

Guardianship produced cost savings more than 3 ½ times the amount allocated. The annual savings were \$29,039,986.24.

State Office of Public Guardianship

Oregon has an Office of Public Guardianship providing Public Guardianship. A staff of 12 provides guardianship services to 132 clients. The biennium budget for the OPG is \$3.9 million. That equates to \$14,773 per client per year.

The per client rate is well over the reimbursed rate of any State Agency in the survey. However, Oregon is now documenting cost savings. One client had over 100 ER visits in the year prior to guardianship and zero ER visits per year while under guardianship.

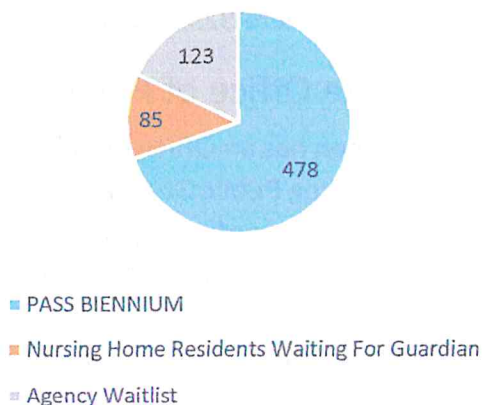
Indigent protected persons (previously referred to as ‘wards’) are individuals the District Court has determined are not capable of adequately looking after their own affairs. This determination by the Court requires that a guardian be appointed to act in the best interest of the protected person.

The current biennium funding supports a **\$10/day per protected person stipend** to not-for-profit agencies ordered by the District Court to serve as Public Guardians for these vulnerable adults. Individuals receiving services under the Developmental Disability Waiver are not a part of this appropriation. Developmental Disability funding is part of the Health and Human Services Budget.

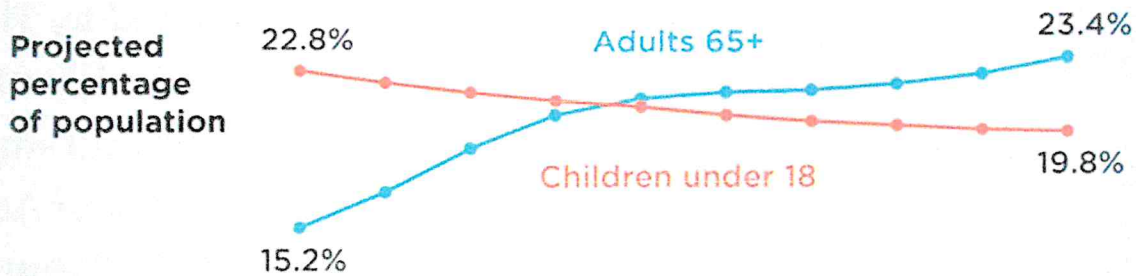
The collective **caseload has grown from 314 to over 450 in the first 19 months of this biennium.** With an average monthly net growth of 5, the **caseload is projected to reach 478 by the end of this biennium.** The current appropriation of \$2,450,000 is insufficient to meet this biennium’s need.



Active Guardianships & Pending Need



The need for guardians has increased over the past biennium and will only continue to increase. We are an aging nation and North Dakota is an aging State. Currently, 16% of North Dakota’s population is made up of individuals 65+. For the first time in U.S. history, older adults are projected to outnumber children by 2034.



The aging of the Boomers is creating a Tsunami of need. This is only exacerbated by the ever increasing number of individuals with mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer’s disease.

The Alzheimer’s Association has determined **16,000 North Dakotans will be diagnosed with Alzheimer’s by 2025**. If only 5% need a guardian that will add 800 more North Dakotans to the Guardian Waitlist.

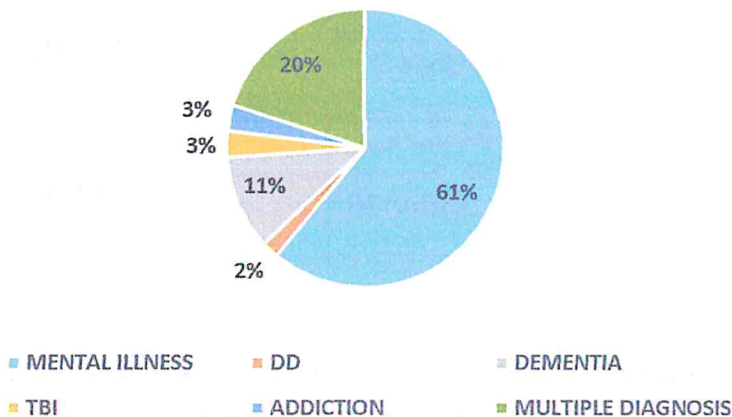
There are prisoners eligible for parole who remain incarcerated because there is no guardian.

Hospitals have individuals that cannot be safely discharged because they need a guardian. One individual remained in the hospital with no prevailing health condition for nine months.

Due to the Fentanyl crisis increasing numbers of people are admitted to Psychiatric care. This month the Bismarck Sanford inpatient Psychiatrist reported to the Senate Human Services Committee that many young people will never recover and may require living in a ‘memory care’ type environment. These are individuals with a life expectancy of another 50-60 years. It is unlikely that family and friends will be willing to take on a lifetime guardianship. These individuals generally fall below the poverty line and will need guardian agency services.

Across the country, Guardianship Agencies that take clients below the poverty line are consistently reporting that over 60% of their clients have one or more mental illness diagnoses. North Dakota is no different.

Diagnosis of Adult Protected Persons



**Information
Provided by Three
North Dakota
Agencies serving the
majority of Adult
PASS Clients**

COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The tangible and intangible costs to the State of North Dakota to NOT have a guardian are significantly higher than the cost associated with appropriately funding guardianship. The costs are also much higher when there is a State funded and operated Department of Guardianship versus partnering with a not-for-profit agency to provide guardianship services. Oregon is just one such example of the costs associated with a State Department of Guardian and Protective Services.

Studies going back to 1988 have been done on the cost impact of Guardianship.

A detailed study published by Spring Publishing Company in the Journal of Ethics, Law and Aging, Vol 5, No. 2, 1999 examined the issue of cost.. The study found that a guardian had a significant impact on improving a protected person's ability to thrive and reduced the costs incurred regarding care, housing, nutrition and medical treatment. The evidence for reduced costs and ability to thrive is consistently proven year after year.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

In 2003 the Center for Gerontology at Virginia Polytech released the findings from a two year study (100 pages) evaluating Public Guardianship. The model of providing guardianships was similar to North Dakota.

The study began in 2001 and the average monthly funding cost was \$250 a month per protected person or around \$3,000 a year. (\$8.33 a day – in 2001).

The total two year funding was \$2,143,687. This covered the cost for serving 360 clients for two years.

Across the two years the Commonwealth was able to help 85 protected person move to less restrictive environments saving the Commonwealth \$5,625,514. Other cost savings related to arranging pre-paid funerals and receiving community based services saved the Commonwealth an additional \$685,340. One protected person was restored to competency and because the complexity of the process of guardianship had now been put in manageable order, six protected persons had friends or family members step in. This saved the Commonwealth another \$21,000. And the quality of life for those served by a guardian was substantially improved.

**Two Year Saving of
\$5,248,096 on a
\$2,143,687 Appropriation.
A 59% ROI**

The study showed a two million dollar expenditure saved the Commonwealth (costs savings minus total State funding) \$2,623,756 in year 1 and \$2,615,340 in year two for a total of \$5,248,096.

Virginia is now reports saving \$5.6 million in health care costs in one year.

It should be noted that Virginia strictly complies with the NGA guardian to protected person ratio of 1:20 and conditions their reimbursement based on complying with this ratio.

By the end of the study total savings had exceeded program costs and 21% of the protected persons showed improvement in self-sufficiency.

WASHINGTON STATE

In 2011 the legislature for the State of Washington ordered the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to conduct a study to determine the effectiveness of their guardianship program (similar to North Dakota). They wanted to analyze the costs and off-setting savings to the State from the delivery of Public Guardianship services as well as client outcomes.

At the time of the study, (a look back from 2008-2011) Washington contracted with Public Guardians at a daily rate of \$10.68 per protected person (or \$325 per month). The State also allowed a billing variance of \$525 for the first three months of a protected person's guardianship due to the extensive time required to launch guardianship. However the total annual billing could not exceed \$3,900. This amount did not include reimbursement for mileage or other approved extraneous expenditures incurred in the guardianship of a client.

Residential costs per client decreased by \$8,131. The average cost for providing a Public Guardian was \$7,907 per client during the time of the study. Just the savings in housing costs covered the cost of a Public Guardian.

Personal care decreased by an average of 29 hours per month for public guardianship clients, compared to an increase in care hours for similar clients.

Again, it should be noted that Washington closely monitors their guardian to protected person ratio (1:20). They also have significant training requirements for guardians. Some of that training is offered by the State.

FLORIDA

In March of 2019 a report was presented to the Office of Public and Professional Guardians – Florida Department of Elder Affairs. Florida, like North Dakota, partners with 17 agencies throughout Florida to provide Guardianship Services. The study used data from 2018-2019.

Among one of the significant cost saving elements that was NOT fully calculated was State labor costs that would be incurred by Florida if they formed a state run department of guardianship (similar to Oregon). They only looked at the wages of a Full Time Equivalent. They did not take into consideration initial outlay costs related to recruitment, hiring, onboarding, equipping, paying mileage/travel, possibly providing vehicles, etc. The initial expenditure to launch a guardianship department would be millions of dollars.

The Florida report went on to recommend fully funding guardianship because lack of consistent funding, which requires agencies to seek other funding sources, (pro bono, internships, grants, donations) is neither sustainable nor advisable. While the need for guardianship continues to increase a guardian agency may be limited in the number they can serve due to lack of donated funds that ultimately create a barrier to hiring qualified guardians.

FLORIDA REPORT SUMMARY:

“Thoroughly documented tangible and intangible cost savings by all programs ... The programs produced substantial cost savings to the State – more than 3 ½ times the amount allocated – or \$29,039,986.24 for one year. If the programs were provided with stable, recurring funding they would still produce a cost savings to the State of \$14,311,954.93.”

The report, due to the increasing complexity of the of public guardian cases, recommended complying with the evidence-based standard of one guardian to 20 protected persons.

The report also recommended dollars be allocated to agencies based on the 1:20 ratio.

North Dakota Guardianship

In 2011 Dr. Winsor Schmidt conducted a guardianship study, requested by North Dakota. The Winsor Schmidt study and recommendations were submitted in 2012. The focus of the study was on the delivery of guardianship services and costs.

It should be noted that at the time of the study, one agency reported moving protected persons from expensive settings to less restrictive settings for 22 guardianship clients in 2011, including 7 clients moving from the State Hospital, 2 clients moving from the Developmental Center, 2 clients moving from a nursing home to a supportive living apartment (AL) and 1 client moving from a hospital to a nursing home. These transitions, made by only one agency, provided significant savings to the State.

THE WINSOR REPORT INFO ON COSTS

Dr. Winsor indicated in his report that there are several published studies of costs associated with providing public guardianship.

In 1983 the cost per client in Florida was \$2,857.00 per year. In 2008 the cost was \$2,955.00.

In 1997 the cost per client in Virginia was \$2,662.00 per year. In 2002 the cost was \$2,955.00.

In 2011 the cost per client in the State of Washington was \$3,163 per year.

IN 2012 DR. SCHMIDT RECOMMENDED A NORTH DAKOTA DAILY RATE OF...

\$10.93 PER DAY FOR 2013-2014 = \$3,935 PER/YR

\$11.24 PER DAY FOR 2014-2015 = \$4,046 PER/YR

THE LEGISLATURE SET THE DAILY RATE

AT \$8.33 A DAY = \$2,999 PER/YR

2023 NORTH DAKOTA DAILY RATE IS NOW

\$10.00 PER DAY = \$3,600 PER/YR

Based on the Winsor Schmidt study and the reported savings, it was recommended that the daily cost for serving protected persons be \$11.24 a day. (In 2010 there were 2,038 Guardianship and Conservatorship cases in North Dakota.) The report also recommended complying with the National Guardian Association protected person ratio of 1:20.

KEEP IN MIND, a daily rate of \$11.24 in 2011 did **NOT** fully fund the guardianship of a protected person. It defrayed the majority of the incurred costs. Agencies would still be dependent upon unpredictable sources of revenue (grants, donations, fund raisers, etc.) to cover costs and end in the black. **The North Dakota Legislature rejected the recommended daily rate. They approved \$8.33 a day which significantly underfunded PASS and significantly impacted guardianship agencies.**

In the later part of 2019 the appropriated sum for PASS allowed the daily rate to be increased to \$10.00. However, it should be noted that PASS funding has been running a deficit.

Lack of funding has resulted in an increase of guardian to protected persons ratio. The **National Guardian Association's recommended guardian to protected person ratio is 1:20.**

Low daily rates impact the ability to hire qualified staff to handle the increasing need to serve more protected persons.



**NORTH DAKOTA GUARDIAN TO
PROTECTED PERSON RATIO**

1:39

**RURAL AREAS WHERE PROTECTED
PERSONS ARE OVER 200 MILES APART**

1:29

The Winsor Schmidt report indicated they conservatively **estimated the cost savings** that would be directly associated with the daily rate as outlined in the recommendation and following the National Guardian Association guardian ratio of 1:20 to be **\$2,400 per month per guardian.**

Using the Winsor Report's 2012 cost of \$2,400 per month saved by having a person under guardianship. The total savings for 536 protected persons for two years:

\$30,873,600

The Cost of Investment recommended for a two year appropriation to fund indigent guardianship services:

\$8,100,000

The State achieves a 74% Return On Investment.

Court appointed Public Guardians are the guardians of last resort. They are working with individuals below the poverty line and the majority have significant mental illness issues. The need and number of protected persons has and will continue to increase.

Since the Study/Report, many North Dakota Public Guardians have taken steps to pursue training, national certification and are now licensed social workers.

However, there is a dire shortage of guardians. The primary explanation for that shortage is that the daily per diem rate of reimbursement does not cover actual expenses. Agencies are consistently running deficits and must constantly seek other funding sources to offset expenses incurred for providing guardianship services to North Dakota's most vulnerable.

The growth rate in the number of PASS clients under guardianship is a direct reflection on the lack of guardians available to assume new clients.

The lack of guardians is the result of underfunding guardianship.

CONCLUSION

Since 2021, PASS Funded Case have been growing at five (5) new cases per month. This will put the case load, by the end of 2025, at nearly 600 cases. This number does not reflect the nearly 90 nursing home residents currently waiting for a guardian.

It does not include the guardianship Tsunami at the door caused by the increased number of North Dakotans diagnosed with Alzheimer's, mental illness, traumatic brain injury and impacts from addiction.

TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE COSTS DUE TO LACK OF GUARDIANS

At any given time the State Hospital has between 5-10 patients needing guardianship. The daily rate for their continued hospitalization is \$691 to \$1,244 per day.

A prisoner who cannot be paroled will cost the State \$150 or more a day to continue incarceration.

A hospitalized patient's average cost for an unnecessary hospital stay is \$2,873 a day.

*Protected Persons transition in their housing needs at a substantially slower rate:
Independent Living → Home and Community Based Services → Basic Care/AL → Skilled.
This provides a substantial saving to the State every year.*

Guardians are a remarkable example of how a small expenditure can reap a huge return on investment. Not only are State dollars saved but the protected person's quality of life reaps a huge reward.

Studies indicate that a vulnerable adult with a guardian make fewer visits to the emergency room, experience fewer and shorter hospital stays and experience a 'guardian-health-lift'. This occurs because the guardian monitors medication management, chronic conditions, and nutrition.

Protected Persons are no longer abused, reducing legal implications; are not as susceptible to exploitation (preserving or restoring assets) and no longer prone to neglect.

Guardians Advocate For Those That Have Lost Their Voice
And Are Easily Unheard.

SUPPORT An Increase to \$8.1

As Guardians working with Protected Persons funded through PASS we urge you to vote YES on an increase to \$8.1.

This request was originally in SB 2345, Section 3 ... PASS Funding:

SECTION 3. APPROPRIATION - OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET - GUARDIANSHIP SERVICES. There is appropriated out of any moneys in the general fund in the state treasury, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of \$8,100,000, or so much of the sum as may be necessary, to the office of management and budget for the purpose of providing grants for indigent guardianship services, for the biennium beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2025.

The increase in the PASS daily rate will:

- 1. Permit Guardian Agencies to Hire More Guardians.**
- 2. Expand Services (especially rural and western regions).**
- 3. Save the State tangible and intangible costs due to the shortage of guardians.**

The requested funding will cover the PASS funding at the present rate of growth of five (5) new protected persons per month.

It will also cover the deficit in PASS funding and essentially raise the PASS daily reimbursement rate to \$20 a day.