

68th North Dakota Legislature
House Appropriations
March 9-10, 2023

Good morning, Chairman Nelson and members of the Committee. My name is Trina Gress, I am a Vice President of Community Options. I stand here before you in support of SB 2012. Community Options is a current contracted provider for a variety of programs that the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) administers. Some of the programs include: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Community Connect, Free Through Recovery (FTR), North Dakota Rent Help (NDRH), and Medicaid Services 1915i and Targeted Case Management.

North Dakota is in a crisis with a shortage of workforce. These programs all work together to support families in need so they can enter the workforce. We need your help to support the budget so these families have case management, childcare, housing, and other supportive services so they can go to work or school and be an active member of the community.

These program impact thousands of client's lives each day. Let me share a few stories with you.

Client A – A Community Connect client who suffered two strokes, went through a divorce, and was struggling with his mental health. His Care Coordinator listened without judgement and assisted him in organizing medical appointments and applying for other services. He now has an apartment and a part time job and is doing well.

Client B – Client was pending revocation, but because his FTR Care Coordinator assisted him in securing a fulltime job and he had just achieved 1 year of sobriety the judge decided to dismiss it. While in the FTR program this client learned how to stop pushing off his responsibilities and build positive social relationships.

Client C – Client is a TANF recipient referred to the JOBS program. She had a house fire and need to access economic assistance programs until she could get back on her feet. Client has now worked to save up enough money, pay off a few bills and become approved for a new trailer home for her family.

As you can see, the programs administered by DHHS through providers like Community Options have lasting impacts on lives of North Dakota citizens. As a provider, we request that you pass on an equal wage increase to the provider rates in all the above listed programs.

In conclusion, Community Options supports SB 2012. We appreciate the collaborative partnership we have with DHHS and we encourage you to pass the DHHS budget. Thank you for your time, are there any questions?

Sincerely Submitted,

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