

My name is Rick VanCamp. My wife and I are legal guardians for my 25-year-old son. He resides in Fargo, ND (District 46) with his mother and myself. Please accept this testimony in support of Senate Bill 2012. This testimony expresses concern for a shortage of manpower to adequately address the needs of individuals defined as disabled.

My son was born at 25 weeks gestation. He was diagnosed with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy, dysarthria (limited tongue movement impacting chewing, swallowing, and speaking), as well as having intellectual challenges. These conditions require assistance to meet all basic cares for his survival (feeding, hygiene, dressing, mobility, etc.).

My wife and I have relied on community agencies to support the work on my son's plan which includes that of supported independence. Over time with the regular turn over in staff combined with the inability to replenish this resource, my son has lost multiple opportunities. One of the more recent examples occurred in December 2022 when we were advised of an opportunity for my son to move into a shared apartment with friends. We were advised that the agency we were working with did not have staff to accommodate the care he would require to live in this supported arrangement. Multiple messages left with another community agency went unanswered. I contacted a representative from the Human Service Center and was told there were no agencies in Fargo that could accommodate his need at that time due to the ongoing staff shortage. I have learned from other families from other parts of the State that the staffing shortage is not only endemic to Fargo but rather an issue being experienced State wide. My focus is to ensure that my son is being provided the opportunities of community interaction as well as the least restrictive living arrangement possible. I am asking the State developmental disability team (inclusive of State and local levels) to work together in finding creative solutions with which to address this issue. Thank you.