



# Heartview Foundation

*"The provider of choice for quality treatment and education of substance use disorders."*



Nationally Accredited

## Testimony of Kurt Snyder

### Heartview Foundation

### In Support of SB 2012

### House Appropriations Committee- Human Resources Division

March 17, 2023

Chair Nelson and members of the House Appropriations Committee- Human Resources Division:

My name is Kurt Snyder and I am the Executive Director of the Heartview Foundation. I would like to express Heartview Foundation's support of SB 2012, specifically for the Behavioral Health Division. The Heartview Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit substance use treatment facility in North Dakota that was established in 1964. We currently have over 130 employees and offer a wide array of community-based services as well as 45 residential treatment beds. Our three locations in Bismarck-Mandan and Cando each have 16 beds or fewer and can serve individuals with Medicaid and Medicaid Expansion. We are in the process of opening a fourth 16-bed facility in Dickinson, North Dakota this summer.

Mental health and substance abuse are growing issues, with 15% of Americans having a substance use disorder in 2020. Heartview greatly benefits from the Behavioral Health Division's work in North Dakota, and we would like to focus our testimony on the major programs which benefit our clients.

#### **SUD Voucher**

In 2022, Heartview served 322 individuals with the SUD voucher program. Heartview has several staff members who work directly with clients to ensure they are covered by private health insurance or apply for Medicaid or the SUD voucher. This program is vital to filling gaps of service and reducing barriers to care.

#### **Community Connect**

Peer support services can be an important piece of recovery, as peer support specialists can share their similar lived experiences with clients, direct individuals to community resources and connect clients with the larger recovery community. Heartview has five peer support specialists on staff and in certain cases, is able to bill their time to Community Connect. Our peer support specialists are a welcoming face to provide hope in Heartview's Opioid Treatment Program, to meet overdose patients in the ER and to help clients navigate their new sober life. According to [Mental Health America](#), individuals who are matched

with a peer support are less likely to be re-hospitalized, have lower Medicaid claims, are more likely to become employed, and are more engaged with mental health and substance abuse services.

### **Human Services Research Institute (HSRI)**

HSRI and the Division of Behavioral Health have created a strategic plan for behavioral health in North Dakota. Heartview supports this effort and sees this work as critical to the future development of a good, modern and equitable behavioral health system based on the recommendations of the 2019 Behavioral Health System Study. Of the 13 identified aims, Heartview is especially concerned with aim number seven, to engage in targeted efforts to recruit and retain a qualified and competent behavioral health workforce. Currently there are not enough mental health and addiction clinicians to serve the state, much less expand services. And even if every student in the field graduated today, there would still not be enough to fill the needs in North Dakota. The state needs to invest in workforce funding and create a pipeline of incoming workers for the future. Many federal and state student loan programs already exist to encourage additional workers, but more work needs to be done to encourage young adults to enter this career path. Although all sectors are struggling with workforce, one important distinction in the behavioral health sector is that by providing needed services, we can return individuals to fully functioning citizens and send them back into their communities ready to be employed in other fields.

### **Opioid Settlement Funds**

The Governor's recommendation includes \$2 million from the opioid settlement fund. Regardless of whether this funding remains in the Health and Human Services budget or is appropriated by the legislature, we encourage funds to be spent expanding access to treatment services and address the behavioral health workforce crisis. We encourage any committee designating the use of these funds to include people from the recovery community, treatment centers and healthcare providers.

### **Other Programs**

With a growing addiction problem in North Dakota, the more services are available, the better supported our clients. Heartview regularly works with Human Service Centers/Community Behavioral Health Clinics and the State Hospital to get patients with severe mental illness the appropriate care. These programs are important to us in the private sector because they provide a much-needed safety net for low-income individuals in crisis. In order for organizations like Heartview to operate smoothly, we need strong, vibrant Human Service Centers with adequate staffing to provide supportive care for clients. The Recovery Assistance Program and Free Through Recovery have increased the number of sober living homes and recovery support services in the area. After leaving an inpatient care setting, statistically clients are likely to relapse unless connected with outpatient care and a supportive living environment.

Heartview Foundation encourages the committee to support an increased Behavioral Health budget to best serve North Dakota citizens. We are always willing to answer questions and any legislators who would like to learn more about Heartview are invited to call us to set up a tour. Thank you for your commitment to addressing the substance abuse crisis in our state.