



March 22, 2023

Chairman Jon Nelson
North Dakota State Capitol
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 2012

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation for defraying the expenses of various divisions of the department of health and human services.

Dear Chairman Nelson and Committee Members

I wish to share with the house members of the State of North Dakota my experience and knowledge as a hospital and long-term care administrator in a rural health care setting as it pertains to this legislation. I have practiced as a health care professional in this state since 1999 and I have been a hospital CEO since 2020. Much of my professional life has and is dedicated to providing health care to rural North Dakotans and I have a passion to assure that these patients continue to have viable access to good health care.

For rural health care to be able to continue in North Dakota, elder care facilities will continue to need resources. Human, and financial resources are necessary. This legislation will help to assure both resources are available to our patients in our communities.

In the community of Rugby we have a number of options for elder care. Heart of America Medical Center operates a 37 bed assisted living facility, a 60 bed basic care facility, and a 33 bed skilled nursing facility. After numerous meetings with members of the public, community leaders, board members, and staff it was determined that Rugby needed to build a new health care facility. The community determined that the new facility would not contain a skilled nursing facility for various reasons. One of the main reasons that led to this decision was the fact that we currently have a highly functional basic care facility in Rugby.

If Basic Care were ever to cease operations in Rugby it would be catastrophic for the community. Our new hospital will be able to house up to 18 non-skilled swing bed residents, but that would be a fraction



medical center

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of the beds needed for our community's needs. The Basic Care is essential to assuring our loved ones can continue to live in their home town community. It offers the right mix of services offered, staff needs, and costs for our community.

Last spring my family was looking for care options for my grandmother. She was 92 years old and starting to fail at home. However, she was not a true skilled nursing facility candidate. She was independent for eating, transferring, and self-cares. She also reminded me weekly that she "did not need a babysitter". Basic care was a perfect option for her. It also provided an option that was significantly less costly than skilled nursing. This is an option we need to support and enhance in our state.

In summary, we need your support of additional dollars for basic care. North Dakota has a proven program that is the most cost-effective option for those needing congregate living and 24-hour support. Additional dollars will support rural communities and help assure our families have access to this important level of care. I would be happy to respond to questions.

Respectfully,

Erik Christenson, CEO