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HB1138

Good Afternoon Chairman Weisz, Vice Chair Ruby and Human Services Committee,

For the record I am Bernie Satrom and I am honored to serve the great people of District 12 in Jamestown and NE Stutsman County.

Today I bring before you HB1138 which is a bill which provides for a pilot program for a Mental Health Court. This was a bill which came up as part of a discussion with a local judge.

Presently our state has a Drug Court which has been very helpful in providing accountability for offenders and help them get their lives back on track. It ultimately saves our state money and helps develop productive neighbors and citizens.

I believe that the Mental Health Court pilot program would provide the same kind of benefits.

A recent study reported that 83.7% of people screened positive for mental illness prior to being booked into jail.

Mental Health Diversion programs divert people with mental health disorders from the Criminal Justice System into appropriate treatment.

Putting those people in jail does not address the issue. Incarcerating individuals with mental illness, fills our jails, prolongs mental illness and potentially turns them into criminals.

The Mental Health Diversion Team could consist of Human Services counselor, prosecutor, probation officer, a law enforcement officer, defendant's guardian . I would defer to the wisdom of the people in this room on who should be included. I would guess that they would meet weekly to assess the status of the participants.

The Mental health concept works

One of our neighboring states reported that recidivism rates have dropped 62% since incorporating this tool.

Opportunity to address mental health problems in their infancy rather than allowing it to grow and get more serious.

Mental Health Courts save money versus warehousing people in jail.

Mental Health Courts Lowers recidivism

Mental Health Courts Address mental health issues before they become more entrenched or serious.

Mental Health Courts help people become healthy productive citizens and neighbors.

HB1138 could make a Difference. Thank you for your time. I would stand for any questions.