

Testimony
Senate Bill 2012 – Department of Health and Human Services Budget
Senate Appropriations – HR Section Subcommittee
Senator Dick Dever, Chairman

January 25, 2023

Chairman Dever and Members of the HR Section of Senate Appropriations:

My name is Lorena Poppe. I am the owner and CEO of Poppy's Promise, a Bismarck-based provider of Developmental Disabilities services, and the current President of the ND Association of Community Providers (NDACP).

NDACP membership represents a great deal of diversity. We are comprised of both large and small providers, and organizations that have been in operation from a few years to many decades. We are unique from each other in the types of services we provide and the locations of our operations. We experience the commonalities of striving to provide the highest quality services possible and being reimbursed through the same payment system.

The COVID-19 pandemic was hard on everyone, including people receiving DD services and their providers. The workforce crisis that started at that time continues today. Many of our services are needed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by some of our state's most vulnerable residents. We do not have the option of cutting back on our hours of operation or being open only a few days a week. We struggle to be competitive with other industries while knowing how urgently our services are needed.

We are sometimes compared to long term care and hospital providers but are unique from them in many ways. One of the most significant differences is that we operate almost completely through Medicaid reimbursement. Private pay services are extremely rare and none of our services are covered by private insurance.

In the six years since I started operations at Poppy's Promise, I understand now more than ever how critical it is that DD providers be supported by the state to do the important work of helping people with disabilities achieve maximum health, happiness, and freedom of choice across their lifetimes. These North Dakotans deserve to experience a sense of security and they need to know their providers will be around to support them and their needs.

In just a few minutes, some of my colleagues will share information with you about our specific requests relative to the DHHS budget and share the rationale behind those requests.

I ask that you consider the current state of services for people with disabilities during an ongoing workforce crisis, the financial vulnerability of new and small providers, and the need to preserve and expand services relied upon heavily by citizens across North Dakota. As providers, we want to not only survive but stand strong in supporting North Dakotans with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for your time today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.