

# SB 2012 – Behavioral Health & State Hospital

Chairman Dever & Members of the Committee,

My name is Ty Hegland and I serve as President/CEO of ShareHouse in Fargo and Grand Forks. ShareHouse serves as one the largest SUD provider in North Dakota, operating three residential facilities, four clinics, transitional housing program, permanent supportive housing program, and subsidiary foundation. In 2022, we assessed nearly 2,000 individuals and conducted over 120,000+ patient interactions. Today I will speak not only the behalf of ShareHouse and those we serve, but additional Acute Psych and Residential SUD providers.

As a sector of healthcare, SUD providers operate very similar to Skilled Nursing Facilities and Critical Access Hospitals. We deal with very complex patients and clinical issues. We employ Medical Directors, Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, Licensed Mental Health Counselors, numerous Nurse Aides, and at the core of our sector Licensed Addiction Counselors. We quite often admit patients directly from ER's, Med Surg Units, and Jails and are tasked with serving very complex patients with chronic diseases. Such diseases require highly intensive efforts, as well as a complex continuum of care.

As an industry, there are some themes from the past two years that I want to make sure we highlight; 1) Patient demand has increased. 2) Acuity has increased. 3) Drug overdoses have increased. 4) Overall workforce totals are flat. Anecdotally as providers, we are seeing an increase in Synthetic Opioids nationally resulting in a 15% increase in overdose deaths nationally in 2021 (Overdose deaths were up 30% in 2020).

As the look to SB 2012 and today's hearing, there are three points we would like to highlight:

1. Continued support for the SUD Voucher is critical. When you think of a continuum of care, High Intensity Residential SUD Providers are on the front lines of some of the most difficult issues in our society. We need the SUD Voucher in to serve the sickest patients in North Dakota and need to encourage enrollment of additional providers like Prairie Recovery Center. We also support the additional FTE laid out in the budget to optimize the program. Providers want to have a highly functioning system and be the best patron of state dollars.
2. There is no doubt the State Hospital needs facility upgrades, but we would ask for caution on cost, scale, and offering. Recently we read a quote about the potential cost of a new State Hospital being \$100 million or more. Meanwhile Prairie St. Johns built a 120 bed hospital for \$40 million. To have such a disparity 90 miles away means we need to spend more time planning and studying what the actual scale and offering needs to be based upon clinical care, workforce, and costs. The State Hospital is the largest IMD provider in the state and any offering should not compete with private providers who have invested millions of their own dollars into our state.
3. Finally, I was not planning on saying anything in regards to the IMD Waiver, but the previous comments from lobbyists were offensive to the providers who do the hard work of treating patients each day. This constant attempt by lobbyists to pit community-based providers against institutionalized providers is not only offensive, but shortsighted. Organizations like

ShareHouse are not only community governed and receive community-based rates, they provided countless community-based services prior to them ever becoming insurance reimbursable. Additionally, comments about the Behavioral Health Planning Council not supporting the IMD Waiver comes as no shock to IMD Providers, as there literally IMD Providers on the council. Ultimately the issue is about providing access to intensive services during an Opioid and Mental Health Crises, while fully utilizing existing resources during a time of inflation and workforce shortage. Thirty nine states have passed a waiver and it is time we join the rest of the nation.

Senate Appropriations – Human Resources Division Committee has a difficult task and we respectfully ask for consideration on these issues throughout the 2023 legislative session.

Respectfully submitted,



Ty Hegland  
President/CEO  
ShareHouse Inc.