

FEBRUARY 8, 2023

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

SB 2166

INTRODUCED BY

SEN DAVID CLEMENS

DIST 16

I AM SENATOR DAVID CLEMENS FROM DISTRICT 16. I AM HERE TO INTRODUCE SB 2166 WHICH IS REQUESTING FUNDS FOR THE LIGHTHOUSE RECOVERY ORGANIZATION OF FARGO.

The bill is requesting funds from the American Rescue Plan to financially support this organization in a community and time that has seen a dramatic increase in mental health and substance use crises.

The Lighthouse is working to meet the needs in our state related to long term support of people suffering from substance use disorder and various mental health disorders, services for state programs Free Through Recovery and Community Connect, Peer Support Services for people struggling with various behavioral health issues, community based support and networking with the F/M homeless population, and is striving to provide a variety of services to meet the growing population serviced by the ND Medicaid Billable 1915i program.

I hereby ask the state appropriations committee to fully support the request of \$3,00,000 in support of the Lighthouse Recovery Organization.

Respectfully submitted,

Sen David Clemens

Lighthouse Church is a recovery-based ministry in downtown Fargo that strives to provide a place of love, encouragement, hope and recovery for anyone seeking help. Recovery is defined broadly at Lighthouse. People recover from many things in life. Lighthouse has a basic spiritual philosophy that every individual is created by God and should be valued. At Lighthouse, people can come as they are and be welcomed, accepted, find support.

As a Recovery Community Organization (RCO), the Lighthouse houses a variety of anonymous groups (NA, AA, Al Anon, SA, RA), as well support groups for various mental health issues (depression, anxiety, abuse). There are faith-based programs, such as Celebrate Recovery, and various other faith-based programs. Lighthouse also has a children's and youth ministry and sees this as an area of need for future growth. The general population of Lighthouse Church, and the Lighthouse RCO is under-resourced.

Over my years of serving in leadership at the Lighthouse I have seen and learned much. Daily I encounter the challenges of Substance Use Disorder and mental health issues. I have seen the barriers that people face when they want to improve their life. I have seen the pain and cost of isolation and loneliness. I have seen the reality that there is no easy or quick fix. Recovery and life change is a long-term journey and investment. I often remind our staff that we are in a marathon with people, not a sprint. I have seen the universal need for love and acceptance and hope. In order to begin the recovery process, people need to establish a foundation of support, accountability, and help. Lighthouse has and is providing these things and more for countless individuals. But I have also seen miracles on a weekly basis. I witness life change and growth every week. **(An example)**

Lighthouse has been a provider for the North Dakota programs Free Through Recovery and Community Connect since their beginning. We have been honored to partner with the state to provide services to hundreds of men and women in these programs over the years. We have strived for excellence in both care coordination and peer support service and have developed a great reputation, not only in our own

community, but across the state. We have also sought to bring our service into the North Dakota Correctional Facilities and hope to renew these efforts after a long freeze on them due to Covid. That said, our services are currently brought into three correctional facilities in ND, and we hope to expand that in the near future.

When we learned about the program 1915i, and the same services we had been providing becoming Medicaid billable, we decided to get involved. Our goal has never been to make money, but to help people. The higher levels of service provider for in 1915i is something sorely needed. We see it every day. We made the investment to enroll, register staff to be able to provide service, learned and adapted to the administrative requirements and challenges, and were amongst the first to get started. As of today (Dec 15, 2022) we are still the only provider billing for peer support services in the state. We believe the program hinges on peer support. We see peer support as the crucial link to the over-all life-change and growth for the people we serve. A number of things occurred though. The referrals did not flood in and we were staffed, ready for them to do so. We also learned that many of the services are dramatically under-reimbursed, especially peer support services. For a year we have sought to navigate these challenges, educate the state on what we were seeing and learning, and do our best to serve the people we worked with. Frankly, the state has learned much from our efforts, and it was done on our dime. Our financial investment and shortfall was quite substantial.

We are seeking funding to help us recoup a bit of that loss and to move forward in services, serving all of the current programs, but particularly 1915i. We are also seeking to administratively organize in such a way so as to better link our state services along with the Lighthouse RCO and developing services for those in need. We would like to expand our peer support services to be able to serve the needs of people who are not eligible for reimbursed services, or who are simply unable to make the step towards such services at this time. We see a growing need for mental health support in our community and are aware that therapists and medical professionals refer people to us for basic support and assistance. We would like to increase our efforts in the correctional facilities of North Dakota and bring the same kind of encouragement and hope people find at Lighthouse to those incarcerated.

Another personal example