

HB 1026 Testimony
Senate Human Services
Senator Lee, Chairman
February 20, 2023

Chairman Lee and Members of the Committee, I am Carlotta McCleary, the Executive Director of the ND Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health (NDFFCMH), which is a parent run organization that focuses on the needs of children and youth with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs and their families. I am also the Executive Director for Mental Health America of ND (MHAND) which is a consumer-run organization whose mission is to promote mental health through education, advocacy, understanding, and access to quality care for all individuals. Today I am testifying as the Chairman of the Behavioral Health Planning Council (BHPC). Members of the BHPC are appointed by the Governor. BHPC's objective is to monitor, review, and evaluate the allocation and adequacy of mental health and substance abuse services in North Dakota. The BHPC has a focus and vision on wellness and recovery that is consumer and family driven. Part of the BHPC's work has been to oversee the implementation of the Human Services Research Institute's (HSRI) report Implementation Plan. We work with HSRI and the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services to provide advice on the implementation process.

The ND Behavioral Health Planning Council (BHPC) is testifying in support of HB 1026. Since 2014, with the release of the Schulte Report, and HSRI report of 2018, North Dakota has recognized that it has been in a behavioral health systems crisis, one that was costing North Dakotans their health, their livelihoods, and even their lives. We needed to act. The HSRI report was meant to be used as a "road map" to ending this crisis. The

BHPC in its advisory role has been able to report meaningful progress in implementing the HSRI report, but much work remains to be done, especially with rebuilding the children's behavioral health system, both with community services as well as crisis services.

The legislature has played a vital role in moving forward improvement to North Dakota's behavioral health system and has wisely placed emphasis on studying and tracking the *implementation* of recommendations from the HSRI report. That work continued during the past interim session when the legislature investigated the acute psychiatric needs of North Dakota, where Renee Schulte released her report last year, highlighting the many challenges we have meeting the needs of those facing a behavioral health crisis. That report introduced specific recommendations to address acute psychiatric and residential care needs. HB 1026 is once again asking that we do not merely study our system gaps, but actively work to fix them. The BHPC wholeheartedly agrees. We need to use the Renee Schulte and HSRI reports to fix our acute psychiatric and residential care needs.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to respond to any questions that you may have.

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