

House Bill 1050

Senator Judy Lee, Chairman March 6, 2023

My name is Dr. Tricia Brown, Doctor of Nursing Practice. I am here to testify in favor of HB 1050. Currently, I diagnose and treat substance use and mental health disorders at Heartview Foundation. I have almost 12 years of experience in the field of mental health and substance abuse.

Several years ago, after working with those in active addiction, it became apparent to me that there was a dangerous gap existing in the medial services for acute drug and alcohol withdrawal, specifically in the Bismarck/Mandan area. Currently someone suffering from acute withdrawal and who needs medical detox has only two places in Bismarck to go; the Emergency Department or jail.

These facilities, as hard as they try, are simply not equipped for a 72-hour medical detox. It is expensive to treat individuals needing medical detox, both for the facilities and also the uninsured, it diverts these facilities from focusing their resources on their primary functions, and these facilities simply cannot offer robust services necessary for medical detox.

It was with this observation the vision of Mosaic Community Triage Center began. Two years ago, I embarked on a journey to open the first acute drug and alcohol withdrawal center in the state of North Dakota. As I have moved forward with the project and after a great deal of research and discussing the project with the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services, it became clear that a change in the law is needed.

At first glance it looked like the Mosaic Community Triage Center would need to be licensed as a Specialty hospital, specifically because I was providing overnight medical care with 24-hour nursing services. However, in researching the Century Code for requirements regarding specialty hospitals, we came up empty handed as there were no provisions that address the specific situation of what the Mosaic Community Triage Center would offer.

We also ran into roadblocks as we researched building locations that would be suitable for the Mosaic Community Triage Center. I began working with Brian Weigel, with Northwest Contracting, and Karla Aldinger who is the Life Safety and Construction Director for the Department of Health, and it continued to become more apparent that an acute drug and alcohol withdrawal center as I am planning is not in the right category as a specialty hospital and I became confident that Mosaic did not "live" on that side of things.

Another hurdle regards the staffing, credentialing, and standard operating procedures that are required for a specialty hospital. While all those requirements are there for very important reasons, I maintain that for what North Dakota vitally needs and for the gap that Mosaic looks to fill they are not suitable and something new needs to be added in the law.

As such, it is our conclusion that a detox center such as the Mosaic Community Triage Center does not fit anywhere in current law and does not fall under the category of a specialty hospital. I am confident that excluding acute drug and alcohol services from the categorization of a specialty hospital would not only benefit our community and our state in the long run but also save lives. I am committed to helping address the addiction crisis we have in our communities, and I am here today to ask you to help me do just that. By making this small change in the law so that professionals like myself can offer this type of service it will benefit the state financially, provide vital care to those with substance abuse disorder and also save lives.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.