

Mr. Chairman, and other members of the committee, my name is Nathan Leier and I'm from a family farm near Strasburg. I vote and live in District 8.

I am testifying in support of Bill No. 2276. I live with a rare, progressive, genetic disorder called Friedreich's Ataxia. Currently there is no treatment or cure for this condition. I can only slow its progression by staying active in life. Every day, little strides are being made to find a cure by researchers and God promises that better days are yet to come!

Again, this disease is a rare one and therefore very unique. I have feeling in all of my extremities; I just cannot execute muscle movements. Right now, I live with my parents who help me with daily activities. I have 6 siblings, living close by, who are gracious and willing to fill the gap and help when the others cannot. I start each day by someone helping me to transfer from my bed to my wheelchair and helping me to dress for the day. Someone then follows me to the bathroom to help me transfer to and from the toilet. Daily activities are done independently until nighttime arrives and I need help with transfers again.

Living in such a rural area doesn't allow for many or any caregivers in my surrounding population. Under current Medicaid rules, a company from Bismarck could be hired to drive to me and help me. So that is 3 hours per day of drive time that the company would be getting paid as they drive to me. It just makes sense to pay family to be with me when I need them. All age groups would benefit from this bill being passed. For example, an elderly person who otherwise, would have no choice but to go to a nursing home could instead have family take care of them without compromising the financial future of the caregiver. This would save the State money by not paying the nursing home and would be so much better for the individual's mental health. There is just a special feeling that you get when someone who truly cares about you is there to help, verses someone who is just by your side for the paycheck.

Thank you for your time listening to my testimony today and thank you for serving the GREAT State of North Dakota!

I urge your support and a yes vote on Bill 2276. If we work together and pass this bill, we will produce a positive result for everyone who relies on help from family members!

I would be happy to answer any questions that you have for me.

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