

Chairman Nelson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mark R. Carlson, I was born in Bismarck and now call Arnegard home. I love North Dakota, it is all I know and all I want to know, I was born here and I will die here. I am extremely proud of my home state!

I am writing you today in reference to HB 1012 for the SUD Voucher Program and the Recovery Housing Assistance Program. Thanks to these two programs I have a life today, they literally saved my life.

Please let me explain why I say saved. After being clean and sober for 17 years in January 2020 I relapsed on methamphetamine. A series of events led to this event, but ultimately the poor choice was made by me. I am no victim here; I am the creator of my problems. On June 20, 2023 I was arrested for drugs in my home in Bismarck and by that time I was a full blown drug addict. Looking back at all of this I like to use the statement I was saved, not arrested on that day. By the time law enforcement came through my door I was all but gone. I went from 240 pounds to 123. I had gone from the position of President of Operations overseeing five Little Caesars stores to unemployed. I crashed my truck, I lost my family, and I had no self-worth or self-respect. The only thing I had left at that point was my apartment, because I had managed the building for 18 years and the owner loved me, and I believe he thought I would beat my addictions. That is not true I would have died in my addiction if not for Law Enforcement and what happened next. After going to jail the court felt I was a good candidate for drug treatment and on October 17, 2023 I was taken to Providence House in Arnegard. When I arrived, I was 100% broken physically and mentally I was a wreck! I was granted this by two things, the ND SUD Voucher and God! I was not going to waste the chance to get better. And that's exactly what I did. I worked very hard in residential treatment, and I utilized all that was offered to me from Providence House. Slowly but surely my health got better, my brain got better, and I started to excel in my recovery. After one month of treatment I had a goal. My goal was to live my life drug free and to give back to the program that saved my life. The only problem is I still had a long, long way to go!

I wanted to go to Endeavor Sober Living to continue on this journey and complete what I had started. And once again North Dakota stepped in and saved me. I received funding through RHAP for 12 weeks of housing in a recovery house. These 12 weeks were the weeks that could have broke me, instead, they made me! In this time was able to focus on my recovery, I completed a day treatment program, and I got a job at a local gas station. Without the 12 weeks grace period I was given I truly believe I would have given up my recovery, at a minimum I would have faced far more difficult struggles during this time.

I hope now you see why I feel like without these two programs I could still be incarcerated and stuck in my meth addiction. Thank you for supporting these programs that saved my life and the lives of many others just like me in our state!

I am happy to report on where I am today. I have 477 days of sobriety. I still live at Endeavor Sober Living and have been promoted to assistant house manager. I help others in the program establish structure and accountability in their day to day lives and get to offer support for others just like me. I was offered a support staff position at Providence House and now I am able to give back to newcomers that come into this program daily. Also, what a journey from a hopeless meth addict to a person that helps people find there hope!

I owe my life to the programs and those that make them happen from the teams at Endeavor Sober Living and Providence House to the behavioral health team that work hard to ensure these programs are accessible and continued for those to come after me. It is almost impossible for me to express my gratitude in words so I try to show it in actions.

If any members of this committee would like to talk to me for additional information on how these programs saved me, I can be reached at (701) 934-7662. I am always willing to make a trip to Bismarck for a face to face meeting as well, I can sneak in time with my kids and family there at the same time! I love you all, thank you for making this possible and saving my life. I now have a life worth living! I will do anything to make sure these programs continue to help others just like me that are all worth saving too!

Sincerely,

Mark R. Carlson