

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

As the Jail Administrator at SWMCCC County Jail in Dickinson, ND, I urge you to recognize the critical importance of the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) voucher program in North Dakota. This initiative is not merely a financial tool; it is a vital resource that can help reduce incarceration rates by providing necessary treatment services to individuals struggling with substance use disorders.

Substance use disorder is a significant contributor to incarceration rates. Many individuals who enter our jail system do so because of offenses directly or indirectly related to substance abuse. Without access to proper treatment, these individuals often cycle through the criminal justice system, leading to higher recidivism rates and increased strain on correctional facilities. The SUD voucher addresses this issue by providing funding for essential treatment services such as inpatient and outpatient care, peer support, and recovery housing, ensuring that individuals receive the help they need before reoffending.

From a correctional perspective, access to early and sustained treatment can significantly reduce the burden on our jails. Studies consistently show that individuals who receive proper substance use disorder treatment are far less likely to return to the criminal justice system. By breaking the cycle of addiction through accessible treatment options, we can help individuals reintegrate into society successfully, maintain employment, and lead productive lives, ultimately reducing the demand for jail beds and law enforcement resources.

Moreover, supporting the SUD voucher program is a fiscally responsible decision. The cost of housing an inmate far exceeds the cost of providing substance use treatment. By prioritizing treatment over incarceration, we can allocate taxpayer dollars more effectively, reducing expenses associated with repeat incarcerations, emergency medical care, and court proceedings. This approach not only benefits individuals in recovery but also strengthens families and communities, making North Dakota a safer and more resilient state.

I strongly urge you to support and advocate for the continued funding and expansion of the SUD voucher program. By investing in effective treatment solutions, we can lower incarceration rates, reduce recidivism, and create a more just and efficient criminal justice system. It is imperative that we provide individuals struggling with substance use disorders the opportunity to reclaim their lives rather than perpetuate a costly cycle of incarceration.

Thank you for your time and commitment to this critical issue.

Sincerely,
Kara Simons
Jail Administrator
SWMCCC County Jail, Dickinson, ND