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House Appropriations, HR Section  
House Bill 1012  
Wednesday, February 5, 2025

Chairman Nelson and members of the committee,

My name is Tracey Zaun, and I am the Executive Director of Open Door Center in Valley City, ND, and Lisbon, ND. Open Door Center is a community provider for 90 individuals with disabilities; we've proudly served some of North Dakota's most vulnerable individuals for the past 65 years. I am writing in support of HB 1012.

Open Door Center has struggled with staffing shortages due to wage competition and low unemployment. While we have roughly 160 outstanding, dedicated Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), we struggle to recruit and retain staff due to competitive area wages, low unemployment, and population stagnation in Valley City and Lisbon. Our Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) are heroes; they make it possible to ensure that the incredible people we support are afforded safe, healthy, and happy lives. Our DSP wages have done little to mitigate the effect of inflationary increases. It is essential to ensure that our **state reimbursement rates are adjusted to match 4% and 3%** federal inflation levels so that we can recruit and retain high-quality staff and ensure our services are maintained for the people we support.

Our DSPs work days, nights, weekends, and holidays. They assist people we support in living as independently as possible—from job coaching to assisting with meal preparation to assisting with personal cares. We serve as many people's family away from family; their guardians put a great deal of trust in us to care for and ensure the safety and happiness of their loved ones. We do so with pride. Many of our DSPs could make more money working at McDonalds; yet they chose to stay in their positions due to the genuine care they have for the people we support.

I urge you to support HB 1012, including the 4% and 3% reimbursement rate increases to the Division of Developmental Disabilities. The quality and sustainability of services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities depend on it.

Tracey Zaun  
Executive Director, Open Door Center  
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