

TESTIMONY House Bill 1012  
House Appropriations  
February 5, 2025

Good morning Mr. Chairman Jon Nelson and members of Committee. For the record, my name is Tom Newberger and I am the Executive Director for Red River Human Services Foundation in Fargo, West Fargo and Wahpeton, ND. Our agency supports approximately 500 people with developmental disabilities in Residential, Day and Social programs. The focus of my testimony today will be brief and discuss inflationary increases for DD Provider along with funding Accreditation cost that the State has nearly always done in the past.

I am here today to ask for 4% and 3 % inflationary increases for DD Providers across the State for the upcoming Biennium. Currently HB 1012 has a 1½% and a 1½% increases for a total of 3% for the next two years. When comparing this to what State employees receive in HB 1012 for the next two years is a 3% and a 3% a total of 6%. So you are aware, we provide services to people with intellectual disabilities that live in group homes, Day programs where we support them in schools, working jobs, in our facilities if they are unable to work a job or if they are too old. We provide services 24 hours per day and on nights, weekends and holidays. State employees who work in the intellectual disabilities field only, such as DD Program Manager or Administrators come into our group homes nearly always from 8:30AM to no later than 4:00PM. They do not visit us on nights, week-ends or holidays. Our staff sometime get hit by people we support in our programs and we have a much higher turnover rate than the State.

In addition, Walmart and Dairy Queens are paying their staff a higher starting wage than our agency, based on feedback from many staff in Wahpeton. Based on the rate matrix (which the State uses to pay DD Providers) it has a wage of \$20.02 per hour for all staff. We take this \$20.02 and lower new staff's starting wages, so we can increase long term staff wages above the \$20.02. Also, we get no funding when staff work over-time, which is much needed when we are sort staffed. Again, please help us by using a 4% and a 3% inflationary increase for DD Providers in HB 1012.

Lastly and briefly, please have the State reimburse us for Accreditation costs. The State mandates these services and has reimbursed DD Providers for decades and now they have back away from supporting us for Accreditation costs.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you