

Chairman Nelson and members of the House Appropriations Committee:

My name is Sarah Carlson. I am resident of Dickinson and I speak on my own behalf and am not representing my employers.

I am writing in support of HB1012 and to share my experience as a supervisor and leader in Developmental Disability Services. I urge you to consider inflationary increases to support staff providing critical supports to people with disabilities.

I wear many hats. I am the Director of an ICF, or group home program that supports 25 adults with disabilities in their homes and with work. I also work for Family Voices of ND and support families in SW ND and beyond that have a child with disabilities by navigating the complex world of supports and services. I also work for the KIDS Program in Dickinson in a similar role, as Experienced Parent, supporting families who have a child with developmental delays or disabilities age birth to 3. I am also a parent of a 12 year old who has complex disabilities.

HB1012 increases funding to these programs, however, I would urge you to reconsider additional inflationary increases of 4% the first year and 3% the second year. We struggle with recruiting and retaining staff. We struggle with finding quality staff. It is an employees arena, and we struggle to compete with organizations and businesses that can increase the cost of their goods to balance the increase of wages of their staff. Baker Boy, a nearby business has entry level jobs up to \$28/hour. How can we begin to compete with that, yet let me remind that the duties of our staff are life-giving and not pastries. Our turnover rate in the group homes the last year is nearly 50%.

We have just passed the 40th anniversary of the lawsuit that identified the supports that were needed for people with disabilities. It was in Grafton and San Haven that we identified human warehouses. Staff were thrown into risky scenarios, with poor ratios, little to no training, and mistreatment present. How does it look today? We have constant turnover. Instability in people's lives. A robust training plan that 100% of the time ends up modified because of open shifts and positions and the need to adjust. We are stretched to be creative. We have tremendously, deeply committed people that are creating lives for people, but this represents a small portion of staff. The majority of staff (sometimes) show up to their job, are frequently on their phone, have performance issues, and struggle. Which means the rest of people struggle too. The market works: we need to increase wages to attract a better quality staff person.

We have been creative. We wrote for a commerce grant to recruit people from Puerto Rico, but this was denied and had far more complications than anticipated. We started a high school mentorship program, which has been wildly successful, but high schoolers cannot work all hours of the day and need supervision. We need to change things up for staff, and in order to be competitive, we need to significantly raise wages.

Vote Yes on **HB1012 with additional inflationary increases of 4% the first year and 3% the second year** to support people with disabilities in your communities.

Warm Regards,

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