

House Bill 1014
House Appropriations
January 14th, 2025

Chairman Nelson and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

My name is Donene Feist and I am the Director for Family Voices of ND. Family Voices of ND is the Family to Family Health Information Center in ND. Our work includes working with families who have children and youth with disabilities, chronic health conditions and special needs. We also work with professionals in educating the overall health needs of persons with disabilities.

Family Voices of ND fully supports Senate Bill 1014.

Protection and Advocacy supports the legal rights of those persons with disabilities and our agency supports families who have children and youth with disabilities, special needs and chronic health conditions. Our paths cross for persons with disabilities and we have had a long-standing partnership.

Family Voices of ND fully supports the priorities and work of the Protection and Advocacy Project. The work that Protection and Advocacy Project does including such priorities as abuse and exploitation of persons with disabilities, Inclusion in our Communities, Criminal Justice, Education, Health Care, Guardianship and Supported Decision Making and Behavioral Health to name a few. Protection and Advocacy being advocates for students with disabilities in the education system is essential for those persons to receive appropriate education in a least restrictive setting according to federal laws.

Our agency and Protection and Advocacy have worked together on education, health, exploitation and more. The needs are many across the state. Many families face issues of injustice. While we assist as much as we can, we are family support. When a legal entity is needed, we turn to Protection and Advocacy to assist that family with the support that is needed beyond what we are able. If anything, in my humble but adequate opinion, an increase to the number of staff across the state is needed. As I stated previously, we see the immense need and strain families are under. Families are exhausted, with the stress due to the injustices they have faced.

The question perhaps we should be asking is if the funding received is adequate to meet the needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration on House Bill 1014

Donene Feist
Family Voices of ND
701-493-2634
fvnd@drtel.net

