

Jennifer Sunstrom

716 Cooper Ave.
Grafton, ND 58237
thesunstroms@gmail.com
7013602269

Chairperson Ruby and Members of the Human Services Committee,

Re: Support for HB1337 – Funding Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Treatment in County Jails

My name is Jennifer Sunstrom, and I am a resident of Walsh County and a teacher. I am writing to express my strong support for HB1337. I am concerned that inmates lose access to Medicaid, Medicare, Veteran Benefits, and in most cases private insurance. This leaves county jails to bear the cost of treatment. These services are often unaffordable, leaving many without care and increasing the risk of repeat offenders.

HB1337 would fill this funding gap, allowing county jails to offer life-changing treatment programs. These services promote recovery, reduce repeat offenses, and ultimately benefit public safety and community health

In my work as a public school teacher, I've seen how untreated mental health issues and addiction can perpetuate the cycle of incarceration and affect families. Often children are the ones who suffer from their caregivers choices. Providing treatment is critical to breaking this cycle. I also had a son who struggled with drug abuse and was incarcerated as a juvenile. It was a struggle to find services for him as a juvenile. He at least had the support of his family. Because of repeated offenses, many times adults have broken ties with their family and don't even have that support.

I strongly urge the committee to support HB1337 and recommend its passage. This bill is a meaningful step toward improving outcomes for individuals and our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me at thesunstroms@gmail.com if you have any questions."

Sincerely,
Jennifer Sunstrom