



# Walsh County Sheriff's Office

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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 Captain Adam S. Trahan, Chief Corrections Officer for Walsh County Sheriff's Office. I am responsible for the day to day operations of the Walsh County Correctional Center. I am writing this to express my strong support for HB1337. Some of you maybe unaware that when individuals become incarcerated they lose access to Medicaid, Medicare, Veterans Benefits and, in most cases, private insurance. As a correctional center we are unable to use federal funding to provide mental health and substance use treatment programs. These services are all too often unaffordable, this leaves many incarcerated individuals to go without care which can lead to a high risk of recidivism.

Walsh County Correctional Center has operated a program that provides mental health and substance use disorder treatment for three years through a partnership with Agassiz Associates LLC. and the Walsh County Health District. This program was solely funded by the Walsh County Commissioners using their ARPA funds. This funding has now ended. If HB1337 is passed, it would allow us to continue to operate a comprehensive mental health and substance use disorder treatment program at the Walsh County Correctional Center as well as allow other correctional facilities across ND to start a program of their own. HB1337 would fill this funding gap, allowing our county correctional facilities to offer treatment that they would not be afforded without these funds. These services can promote recovery, reduce recidivism, and provide a benefit to public safety, our community and their families wellbeing. In the year 2023, it cost around eight-four thousand dollars (84K) in the State of North Dakota to house one incarcerated individual for a year. That is roughly two hundred thirty dollars and thirteen cents (\$230.13) a day. With HB1337 and proper treatment we could help reduce this cost and help with the overcrowding that the North Dakota Correctional System is experiencing.

I have worked in the correctional field since 2001. I have personally seen when individuals are unable to get treatment for mental health and substance use disorder which can have an impact on the community and their families. I had a cousin that was a heavy drug user and became incarcerated for distribution of narcotics. He spent two years in a correctional facility and on the day of his release, he decided to partake in the same drugs he used before he was incarcerated. That night he died of a drug

overdose, at the age of twenty-nine years old (29). While working here at Walsh County Correctional Center, I noticed an individual that reminded me of him. He was able to take part in the services we offered through Agassiz Associates LLC. and the Walsh County Health District. I could see a change in him from the beginning of the program till he left. He asked the judge when she was giving him his sentence if he could stay at Walsh County Correctional Center an extra couple of weeks to finish his program. I believe if this program was around when my cousin was incarcerated he would still be here today. I have seen the individual that was incarcerated in the facility out in the community. He is working, staying out of trouble and spending time with his children.

I want to strongly urge the committee to support HB1337 and recommend its passage. Let North Dakota show the rest of the country that we are dedicated to helping our residents of this state. This bill is an essential step toward improving outcomes for individuals, our communities and their families.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact me at [atraham@nd.gov](mailto:atraham@nd.gov) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Adam S. Trahan