

Testimony in Support of ND SB 2030
Senate Appropriations Committee – Education and Environment Division
January 21, 2025

Chairman Sorvaag and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sarah Kennedy, and I am the Executive Director at Presentation Partners in Housing (PPIH), an agency dedicated to providing critical housing services to individuals and families facing homelessness in the Fargo/Moorhead metro. I wish to express my strong support for North Dakota SB 2030, which will deepen the capacity of the homeless response system to address homelessness through the housing supports, services, and resources.

For decades, PPIH has been on the frontlines, offering assessment, triage, referral, short-term rental assistance, mediation, housing navigation, and intensive housing-first case management to individuals experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. While we have seen tremendous successes in helping people transition out of homelessness, we are also witnessing an increasing number of individuals and families who are unable to access the housing support they need due to the overwhelming demand and insufficient resources. In 2024, PPIH received crisis calls from 9,479 unique individuals in the Fargo/Moorhead metro area. Due to limited resources, the collaborative system of partner agencies was only able to offer support to 36% of those in need. SB 2030 would ensure support is available for our most vulnerable neighbors.

The rate of homelessness has continued to rise, and this trend highlights a critical need for intervention. SB 2030 represents a crucial opportunity to prevent homelessness, not just manage it. The bill will provide the necessary tools and resources for communities across ND to add more housing units and housing supports to meet the needs. Besides affordable housing, the bill will allow for comprehensive services—such as case management and housing navigation—that are proven to have long-term benefits in helping individuals maintain stable housing.

While the challenges of homelessness can seem insurmountable, we must acknowledge the positive outcomes achieved every day. PPIH, like others across our state, works tirelessly to support individuals and families in securing stable housing, and we witness firsthand how this stability dramatically improves their overall well-being, health, and success. In a recent study of thirty individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, PPIH discovered a community cost savings of \$620,000 as a result of decreased ambulance transports and jail, detox, shelter, and emergency room visits. Imagine the impact if we had adequate resources to serve all who are vulnerable. When North Dakotans have housing there is an 81% decrease in emergency services. Simply put, it costs our communities more to ignore homelessness than to provide supportive housing.

The failure to pass this bill would undoubtedly exacerbate an already overburdened system, leading to even higher rates of homelessness and increased costs for state and local communities. It is far more cost-effective to provide individuals with housing plus the support

services they need to thrive than to allow homelessness to persist and grow, which burdens not only the individuals and families involved but also our healthcare, criminal justice, and emergency services systems.

I urge the committee to support SB 2030 and to take bold action to address homelessness in our state. By investing in housing and services now, we will not only prevent more individuals from falling into homelessness but will also help countless North Dakotans regain their stability, dignity, and self-sufficiency.

Thank you for your consideration.

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