

Senate Appropriations – Education and Environment Division
65th Legislative Assembly
January 21, 2025
SB2030

Chairman Sorvaag and members of the Committee:

My name is Andrea Olson, and I am the Executive Director of the Community Action Partnership of North Dakota (CAPND). CAPND represents the seven Community Action Agencies (CAAs) across North Dakota, which operate programs designed to empower residents to secure and maintain self-sufficiency. We are part of a National Network of over 1,000 CAAs with the shared mission of helping people and changing lives.

In North Dakota, our seven CAAs operate as private, nonprofit organizations and collectively serve all 53 counties. Together, we reach approximately 20,000 households annually, assisting individuals and families facing hardship. Our programs include a wide range of services such as Case Management and Budget Counseling, Head Start, Supportive Services for Veteran Families, Weatherization, and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance.

On behalf of CAPND, I am expressing support for SB2030 and to respectfully urge a **Do-Pass recommendation** on this critical legislation. SB2030 proposes to increase the Housing Incentive Fund to \$200 million and the North Dakota Homeless Grant to \$10 million.

These investments are vital for addressing the persistent and growing housing challenges faced by North Dakotans. As documented in our **2023 CAPND Statewide Needs Assessment**, housing instability remains a top concern across the state. The assessment was completed by over 3,000 participants; many of whom are experiencing poverty. The study highlights the urgent need for safe, affordable housing options and underscores the importance of increased funding for programs that provide direct assistance to individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The Housing Incentive Fund has a proven track record of expanding access to affordable housing by leveraging private and public resources. Increasing its funding to \$200 million will enable more housing projects to come to fruition, providing long-term solutions for communities across North Dakota.

Similarly, the North Dakota Homeless Grant plays a critical role in meeting the immediate needs of our state's most vulnerable residents. Increasing its funding to \$10 million will allow for expanded services, including emergency shelter, rental assistance, and supportive services, all of which are essential to preventing and addressing homelessness.

At CAPND, we see firsthand the profound impact of these programs. For example:

- Our case managers regularly work with families who are one unexpected expense away from losing their homes.
- Our HOME ARP Program allows for a graduated scale for support for those who are at risk of homelessness or who are currently experiencing homelessness.

- Veterans in our Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program rely on rental assistance to transition out of homelessness. We have seen increased success with our Shallow Subsidy Program funded by the Federal Veterans Administration.
- Affordable housing development supported by the Housing Incentive Fund has provided many of our clients with safe and stable places to call home.

The increased funding proposed in SB2030 aligns with the pressing needs identified in our statewide assessment and reflects a commitment to addressing housing insecurity at both systemic and individual levels.

We are grateful for your leadership in advancing this legislation and for your ongoing commitment to the well-being of North Dakotans. On behalf of CAPND, I respectfully urge a **Do-Pass recommendation on SB2030**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea Olson
Executive Director
Community Action Partnership of North Dakota