

March 16, 2025

Dear Chair Dever and Members of the Senate Appropriations Human Resources Committee,

My name is Sommer Jacob, and I am writing to express my strong support for **House Bill 1012**, which provides essential funding for the **North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)**. This budget is critical to families like mine, ensuring access to **In-Home Supports, Respite Care, Early Intervention, Adult Services, and Medicaid providers, including physical therapists, occupational therapists, and dentists.**

I am the mother of a **five-year-old son with Down syndrome**, who was also born prematurely, spending **seven weeks in the NICU**. Shortly after birth, we learned that he had **serious congenital heart defects—ventricular septal defect (VSD) and atrial septal defect (ASD)—**that required **open-heart surgery out of state as an infant**. Unfortunately, his recovery was complicated by a **blood clot**, which we discovered on our way home, requiring us to immediately fly back for additional treatment.

While my husband and I are grateful to have **primary medical insurance**, **Medicaid has been critical in helping cover the additional costs of our son's complex medical needs, which require lifelong monitoring.** Managing his care would be an overwhelming financial burden without these supports.

Due to his **premature birth, congenital heart condition, and Down syndrome**, our son was not permitted to attend daycare and has **required in-home support since birth**. These services have been a **lifeline** for our family, allowing us to provide him with the care and therapies he needs to thrive. **They have also allowed my husband and me to continue running our businesses, which provide jobs and services in our community.** Without these supports, balancing our son's significant medical and developmental needs with our ability to contribute to North Dakota's economy would be significantly more difficult.

Why These Supports Matter:

- **In-Home Supports and Respite Care:** These services ensure that children like my son receive **consistent, high-quality care** while allowing parents to continue working and providing for their families.
- **Early Intervention:** Because of **Early Intervention services**, my son has made significant progress in communication, mobility, and independence. Without these supports, children with disabilities risk falling behind, requiring **more intensive and costly services later in life.**
- **Medicaid Providers (PT, OT, Speech and Dental Care):** My son requires **ongoing physical, speech and occupational therapy** to build communication, mobility and strength. Medicaid ensures that he receives these services **without excessive delays or gaps in care.**

Request for a 3% Increase Over the Biennium:

I strongly urge the committee to approve a **3% increase in funding for both years of the biennium** to ensure these vital services remain accessible to North Dakota families. The **cost of providing care is rising**, and without appropriate funding, families like mine risk losing access to the support that allows us to care for our loved ones.

Investing in these programs is an investment in North Dakota's families, workforce, and economic future. Families like mine depend on these resources to maintain our quality of life and continue contributing to our communities.

Thank you, **Chair Dever and committee members**, for your time and thoughtful consideration of this important funding request. Your support will make a lasting impact on families across North Dakota.

Sincerely,
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