

HB 1012 (2025 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY)
HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION
SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HONORABLE DICK DEVER, CHAIRMAN
MARCH 18, 2025
TESTIMONY OF BRUCE MURRY FOR FRASER, LTD

Good Morning, Chairman Dever and members of the Human Resources Division of the Senate Appropriations Committee. I am Bruce Murry, a registered lobbyist for Fraser, Ltd. (Fraser) of Fargo, North Dakota. Fraser supports children, youth, and adults on their life's journeys towards independence through four main programs: independent living, transitional youth services, mental health, and childcare.

Fraser's Stepping Stones Resource Center serves at least 500 young adults (18-26) at risk of homelessness and other crises annually. We weave food, clothing, winter shelter, case management, employment support, and onsite mental health professional visits into a unique center using the Transition to Independence Process. Our evidence-based process shares common features with the State's much-welcomed Certified Community Behavioral Health Centers. We often serve as a destination for police safety interventions, mental health treatment discharges, and emergency stabilization while awaiting other services.

We thank the HR Division's funding for this unique program at \$300,000 (\$150,000 per year) in 2023, and the Governor for including it in this budget. We will continue multiplying your investment to serve hundreds of threatened young adults from around the state. Private donations fund the majority of the Stepping Stones Resource Center's operations. The State's commitment reassures private donors that the program is broadly supported.

Our Valley Hope Counseling Services increase Fraser's ability to provide services to people with behavioral health needs with much quicker access to

professional mental health services. We appreciate this bill's increased access to behavioral telehealth services. We urge you and the Department to continue that expansion, helping us hire more professionals to serve residents of remote communities. We also appreciate incentives for developing the stretched workforce for professional behavioral health services in this and other bills.

Fraser supports the legislative platform of the North Dakota Association of Community Providers. Thank you for North Dakota's efforts to ensure citizens with intellectual and developmental disabilities receive appropriate services in the least restrictive environment. With your appropriation - and the best possible inflator for providers to meet rising costs - HHS and their expertise help us build and retain our limited workforce. We also recognize the Life Skills and Transition Center's role as a safety net for the people we serve. Relying upon LSTC's safety net, providers can take the organizational risk to serve people with the highest needs in their communities. Making accreditation voluntary will allow Fraser to negotiate a more focused accreditation package to maximize our service quality.

In addition, Fraser wishes to thank the Legislative Assembly for its investments in developing the childcare workforce. Childcare supports the workforce for all of our other programs. Fraser's Child Care Center also struggles to find adequate staffing, and we appreciate the assistance to child care programs within the HB 1012 budget.

Thank you for the chance to address you today. I am happy to answer any of your questions now or as you deliberate. I will find the best expert at Fraser to answer any questions I cannot.