

**House Bill 1012**  
**Senate Appropriations Committee – Human Resource Division**  
**March 26, 2025**  
**Senator Dever, Chair**

Chairman Dever and Members of the Senate Appropriations, Human Resources Division, my name is Robin Fuehrer, Director of Community Church Child Care in Bismarck.

I would like to thank you for this last year of funding for our children with special needs. It is, in large part, do to this funding that we have been able to continue to be a program that quickly says 'Yes' to families looking for care for their extraordinary children.

I want to share a few of the things that grant funding has allowed us to do for our children this year.

First, I would like to talk about the Inclusion Support coaching. This service has been of great value to us! Our inclusion coach comes in to observe classrooms, talk with teachers and make recommendations to more fully include our children with special needs. This support has really helped our teachers to get the resources they need to best support their children and, I believe, has diminished teacher burn out, due to the high needs that come with these children. Knowing that we have our support coach takes much of the stress away from including children with needs that we are unfamiliar with in our program. We know that support is available as soon as we need it and that is very valuable to us. As a director, the support I have received in reference to the Inclusion Support Grant has been immeasurable. I tend to have a lot of balls in the air all of the time and the paperwork that comes with grants is a ball that would often get dropped without the support of my coach!

The second part of inclusion support that I want to talk about is funding for staffing, materials and other support for our children. This funding is key to me being able to consistently say yes to families with special needs. The greatest need I have in this area is staffing. Having children with additional needs in a classroom, adhering to regular ratio guidelines, is a set up for failure rather than success. We have seen tremendous success with social/emotional curriculum and supplies for our children who need behavioral support. We have been able to make environmental modifications, like adding sound absorbing panels to some of our rooms, which has been directly connected to decreased negative behaviors. Children who have speech or sensory processing issues have really loved that they are no longer being overwhelmed by sounds in their learning spaces.

I want to share a few stories with you about how this support has been so beneficial for specific children in our care.

We have a child who was kicked out of a previous daycare due to behaviors related to their special needs. I understand the position the director was in- when one child requires eyes and hands very near by at all times, the classroom can not function smoothly with out additional staffing. Having this child in a classroom with a teacher who is supported by our inclusion coach, where sensory needs are being addressed in the environment, and where we have additional staffing available, has made a night and day difference for this child's ability to be included in the classroom! I am hearing from the teacher, the parent, and the child's therapist about the incredible progress that has been made. The Inclusion Support grant helps to supply so much to help this child's ability to succeed in the classroom.

We have a child who comes to us for after school care. In school they require a full time, one on one aide to help them in the classroom. We have been working hard with the child's parent to help them to be included in our classroom for after school care and we would not be able to do this without the extra staffing that the Inclusion Grant helps to provide.

We have a child with a brain injury from infancy, who wants so much to be included in the classroom but, due to the injury, gets very easily overwhelmed and has impulsive behaviors that would make it very difficult, if not impossible, for them to succeed in a classroom without special accommodations. These accommodations are made possible, in part, by the Inclusion Support grant.

I frequently have families call who are referred to us by therapists and other families with special needs. One of those families had a child with a rare platelet condition that caused physical differences and also poses extra risks if the child falls, due to bleeding issues. This child loves to get right in there and play with their peers! The condition they were born with, however, didn't allow arm bones to grow and caused the leg bones to grow in a fused 'w' sit fashion, with legs bent and no ability to bend the knees. Because of this they can not walk but instead scoot around to keep up with others. This family is new to our program and we are meeting with our inclusion coach this week to discuss ways to help this child to be fully included in the classroom. An extra teacher is required for safety reasons and to help move the child from one area of the building to another. We are going to be working with adaptive services to see if there might be a mobility device to help them move down the halls with their peers rather than have to be carried, especially important to children in the "I do it myself!" Phase! We are also looking into different flooring options so, when this spunky child who tries to scoots themselves right up ladders to go down slides, falls they will be better protected from additional serious bleeding issues. The Inclusion Support grant helps to make all of this possible for this child.

When these families call me looking for care, the Inclusion Support grant helps me to quickly say yes, knowing I will have support from my state to care for these children and their families. Thank you for the past funding and I ask that you to please reconsider proposed budget cuts that would seriously impact my ability to continue saying yes when these families call.

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