



Commissioners

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Testimony in Support of HB 1012
Senate Appropriations – Human Resources Division

March 26th, 2025

Chairman Dever and members of the committee,

My name is Katie Jo Armbrust and I work for the Grand Forks Housing Authority. We are the primary provider of housing assistance in Region IV, with some client services as well as an emergency shelter, to more than 2,000 households in the Grand Forks area.

I provide testimony today in support of HB 1012 and the Behavioral Health Division, specifically for the Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) grants, of which we receive for one of our properties, LaGrave on First. LaGrave on First is a Housing-First Permanent Supportive Housing project with 42 units of one-bedroom, one-bathroom, fully furnished units, that opened in August of 2018. Housing First is a model that was initially supported by the Bush administration and provides access to housing without requiring sobriety or participation in treatment or services. Our tenants are referred to us using a coordinated system which works with homeless providers in the area and across the state; LaGrave on First is specifically for people who have experienced chronic homelessness, which means twelve-plus months of homelessness and they have a disability. Permanent Supportive Housing: permanent meaning there are no restrictions on the length of tenancy, we use typical 12-month leases; supportive meaning there are voluntary services offered on-site and coordinated for off-site to support tenants with their goals and help keep them housed; housing is affordable to each tenant through Federally funded Project-Based Vouchers, each tenant pays approximately 30% of their monthly income towards rent.

During the 2021 legislative session, the administration of these funds changed to the Behavioral Health Division and greatly improved our ability to provide wraparound, supportive services to our tenants. We have housed and supported 55 people since July 1st of 2023 through the end of 2024. We have utilized these dollars to meet tenant needs by not only funding our 24/7 housing support service staff on-site, but also our occupational therapy and nutritional program services. The success of housing people at LaGrave on First is due in large part to the PSH funding, as well as our partnerships with Altru Health System for on-site RN case management and bi-weekly MD visits, and the University of North Dakota in providing internship opportunities for Occupational Therapy students.

Of note, for the 55 individuals that we have supported and housed during the current biennium, 11 of those individuals are original 2018 tenants (6.5 years housed!). At the end of 2024, our 43 residents average length of stay was 43,939 days or approximately 3 years.



Additionally, we have begun the process of transitioning administration of another state PSH grant from Prairie Harvest Mental Health, 21 tenants, to us as they proceed with closing their doors. This switch came at the request of PHMH and includes working with the Behavioral Health Department to ensure service provision is not interrupted for the tenants while their staff become employees of the Grand Forks Housing Authority, anticipated in the next month.

As we are well aware, ending homelessness requires robust services, the state PSH grant provides that. We are immensely grateful for the support provided by the Behavioral Health Division and the continued funding of PSH Grants by you all.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie Jo Armbrust". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katie Jo Armbrust