



Senate Human Services
SB 2112
January 13, 2025

My name is Kirsten Dvorak, and I am the Executive Director of The Arc of North Dakota, the oldest statewide disability advocacy organization. While SB 2112 intends to address broader service needs, The Arc strongly opposes it because it could set a dangerous precedent, leading to unintended and harmful consequences for those who depend on the Life Skills and Transition Center (LSTC). While we recognize that LSTC currently provides specialized care for individuals with developmental disabilities, our focus must remain on reducing reliance on the Center by investing in community-based alternatives.

LSTC exists to serve individuals with developmental disabilities who require specialized care and support. Expanding its scope to include non-eligible individuals risks overwhelming the Center's resources and compromising the quality of care provided to its most vulnerable residents. These individuals rely on the stability, consistency, and expertise of LSTC to maintain their progress and quality of life. Diverting resources to address broader populations would leave these residents underserved and vulnerable, effectively abandoning the Center's mission to provide life-changing care.

We are particularly concerned about proposals to use LSTC for minors facing mental health challenges. While these needs are critical, we believe that LSTC is not equipped to provide the specialized, community-based care that these minors require. Institutionalizing minors in an environment that is not tailored to their needs risks isolating them and undermining their well-being. Instead, the state should prioritize developing strong community-based mental health programs that offer tailored, integrated, and compassionate support. This approach effectively addresses their needs and aligns with best practices for mental health care.

The Arc of North Dakota firmly believes that individuals with developmental disabilities thrive best when supported in their communities. Over-reliance on LSTC as a default solution for vulnerable populations undermines the broader goal of fostering inclusion, independence, and dignity. By investing in community-based services, the state can provide targeted support that empowers individuals and strengthens our communities rather than defaulting to institutional solutions.

In conclusion, SB 2112 threatens to undermine LSTC's core mission and jeopardize the care of those who depend on its services. While we are saddened that it has gotten to this point, we strongly believe that the solution lies in expanding and strengthening community-based programs that address the diverse needs of all individuals in North Dakota.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

Sincerely,
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