

**Testimony**  
**Senate Bill 2305**  
**January 24, 2025**

Senator Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee, my name is Julianne Horntvedt, and I serve as the Executive Director of the North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities. I am submitting testimony on behalf of our Advocacy Committee.

For many families, caring for a loved one with disabilities is a full-time responsibility that requires immense time, energy, and commitment. This caregiving often comes without pay, forcing family members to make difficult decisions between their financial stability and their loved one's well-being. Parents, siblings, and other relatives frequently reduce their working hours, take unpaid leave, or leave their jobs altogether to provide the necessary care. This financial sacrifice can be devastating for families who are already struggling with the costs of medical treatment, therapies, and specialized care equipment.

By supporting this family-paid caregiver program, we give families the support they need to continue providing high-quality care in the home. Families are often the most qualified to provide this care because they understand their loved one's needs, preferences, and medical history better than anyone else. Allowing them to be compensated for this important work means families can continue providing that care without risking their financial futures.

This program also has profound benefits for people with disabilities. People with disabilities thrive in familiar, supportive environments. Home-based care is often preferable to institutional care, not only because it allows for a greater sense of comfort and dignity, but also because it is more personalized and aligned with the individual's unique needs. The consistent presence of a family member can help individuals with disabilities feel safe, stable, and empowered, which contributes to better health and emotional outcomes.

On a larger scale, this program benefits our state by helping reduce the need for more expensive institutional care and emergency medical interventions. When family caregivers are supported, families can keep their loved ones at home longer, resulting in reduced healthcare and housing costs for the state. This approach is both cost-effective and compassionate. By investing in the well-being of caregivers, the state

would be making a long-term investment in the health, dignity, and independence of individuals with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Julianne Horntvedt

701-328-4847

[jhorntvedt@nd.gov](mailto:jhorntvedt@nd.gov)