

Senate Human Services
SB 2305
January 26th, 2025

Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services committee,

My name is Katynka Morrisette and I live in Bismarck, ND with my husband and our 3 young children. I am here today in support of Senate Bill 2305, pertaining to the family paid caregiver service program and the Cross-Disability Advisory Council.

I am here today to give testimony on why I support SB 2305 and share with you how it impacts our family. I am the primary caregiver to our three children Joey (age 9), Medrick (age 8), and Eleanor (age 7), who are on the Medically Fragile Waiver. They require extraordinary care due to their metabolic condition and other complexities.

Daily they require multiple doses of medications and nutritional support administered through their G or G/J tube, a complex feeding schedule and diet, glucose and ketone checks, breathing treatments, care for their medical ports, and assistance with home therapy treatment plans and daily living activities. Due to their high level of need and how specialized some of these cares are, we have been unable to find appropriately trained staff to provide support for them.

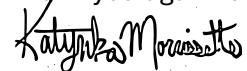
In 2023 legislation was passed (SB 2276) that developed the Paid Family Caregiver Pilot Program in North Dakota. Our family has been able to participate in the program and see firsthand the benefits that have resulted. This has reduced some of the financial burden of my previously lost income, we saw a further reduction in hospital admissions this past year, and it has improved the overall health of our children. Last week, Joey told me he was “happy I was his worker because he never had to worry someone gave him the wrong food and was going to make him sick.” I did not foresee the positive mental impact this program would provide, but the fear I had as a mother in leaving my children with an unqualified caregiver is nothing in comparison to the fear and anxiety my child was feeling.

I support SB 2305 requiring the caregiver payments to be comparable to the rate for self-directed support staff, because I am a qualified and trained caregiver who wants to continue to be seen as part of the workforce. The payment rate should not be decreased due the age of the participant (as we saw in the pilot program) but should be based on the rate we are authorized to pay a direct support professional that we hire off the street.

I also support the amendment to ensure the extraordinary care assessment fully encompasses the support needs of the participant, considering assistance with daily living tasks, emotional and behavioral health, and medical cares. The assessment should be balanced and ensure that kids of all ages are able to access this service option if their needs and cares are extraordinary.

Thank you for your time today and allowing me to share with you the impact your past legislative work has had on our family. I am asking for a “Do Pass” recommendation on Senate Bill 2305 so that more families in our state can access this service option with improvements learned through the pilot program and fill the caregiver shortage that so many have experienced. I will now answer any questions you may have for me.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.



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