



P.O. Box 2081  
Bismarck, ND 58502-2081  
Phone: (701)222-1854  
Email: [k.dvorak@thearcofbismarck.org](mailto:k.dvorak@thearcofbismarck.org)  
Website: [www.thearcofbismarck.org](http://www.thearcofbismarck.org)

**Testimony House Bill 1405**  
**House Finance and Tax**  
**January 27, 2021**

Chairman Headland and members of the Committee, my name is Kirsten Dvorak. I am the executive director of The Arc of North Dakota, which includes all six Arc chapters in North Dakota: Bismarck, Bowman, Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Valley City. Our mission is to improve people's quality of life with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively support their full inclusion and community participation.

According to the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (DD Act) and other federal legislation, "disability is a natural part of the human experience...". Prevention activities do not diminish the value of individuals with intellectual and/or other developmental disabilities (I/DD) but instead strive to maximize independence and enhance people's quality of life with I/DD.

When the bill was passed last session, a sunset clause of two years was attached to the program to evaluate the program and see if changes needed to be made. There were five individuals in the process of using the program when COVID hit, and like most, they had to put their jobs on hold due to being at high-risk.



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In meetings with Vocational Rehabilitation, it became apparent that we needed to add supported employment to make it more accessible for individuals to obtain employment. Supported employment creates a "carved out" job opportunity for the employee with I/DD, which identifies specific tasks within a given job that might be reassigned to another position. There are 39,000 individuals with cognitive, independent living difficulties and those with self-care difficulties in North Dakota. Only 50% of individuals with a cognitive disability are in the workforce and only 27% in the workforce with individuals with self-care difficulties. With the proposed amendment, we hope to make the process easier for individuals to obtain employment.

Work gives individuals a sense of purpose and self-worth. For many, it defines who we are and is a source of justifiable pride. Work helps improve individual finances, and it helps us connect socially. All individuals, regardless of disability, deserve the opportunity to be full members of their community where they can live, learn, work and play through all stages of life.

Chairman Headland and members of the Committee, we ask for a due pass on HB 1405.

I have attached the proposed amendment.

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