



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

**Testimony Senate Bill 2269
Senate Education
January 25, 2021**

Chairman Schaible 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.

I also am a parent of a 21 year with Autism, Radek, who also attends ASTEP at Minot State. I have included his testimony about how ASTEP has helped him become more independent and helps him reach his goal of being a graphic designer.

Radek was accepted to Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD), one of the nation's top graphic design schools. Radek has produced various logos for Mental Health Advocacy Network, Protection, and Advocacy, and did the graphic work on The Arc of North Dakotas' Disability Data Book. However, as we say, his autism got too big. It became too overwhelming, even with disability services. We decided to bring him home halfway through the second semester.

This fall, the ASTEP program was open for individuals with developmental disabilities, like Radek. He is now thriving with the support of his case manager, the mentors with studying, and even receiving speech therapy to help with social cues. In return, he is learning how to show up on time for work, learning time management, and how to break down a project. All skills he will need to be successful as a graphic designer and live independently in the community.

I have also included testimony from Peter Gravdahl, a graduate of the ASTEP program.

Kirsten Dvorak