

Testimony
HB 1012
January 28, 2025

Chairperson Rep. Nelson and Members of the Committee

My name is Chaz Brobst. I am encouraging you to pass HB 1012. There are many pieces of this bill that are near and dear to my heart. As an individual who has dealt with serious mental illness for over half my life at this point, I know how important funding is for Behavioral Health. Things like 988, mobile crisis units, Peer Support, Behavioral Health Clinics and others. I know what it is like to have to go out of state for mental health care because services have not been offered in North Dakota. This should not be happening. If the Vision of Health and Human Services is really to be the healthiest state, then we need to be providing the funding in order to provide the services to do just that. Without this funding symptoms of mental illness will increase and this would include suicide rates in our state. They are already too high. I have gotten lucky that none of my attempts have ended my life. For that I am grateful. I have been given the chance to provide testimony asking you to continue to fund these programs. To some it may be dollar signs, to others it is more time. More time to spend with a loved one. More time for doing the things they enjoy. It is another day on earth. Without funding for behavioral health lives will be cut short because they cannot receive the care, they need in a reasonable amount of time. Until someone has been to that very dark hole you don't know just how long a 5-minute hold while trying to access critical mental health care really is. Or how long a month wait is to see a counselor is until every breath seems like an eternity and breathing seems too difficult to do. Funding programs like Mental Health America of ND (MHAND) and Consumer Family Network (CFN) not only provides a place for people to turn to find services and navigate the system but also gives hope. Hope is found within the people. Continued funding of the State Hospital is also necessary. While never a pleasant experience it is a place that is needed for those that need it. Funding HB 1012 is absolutely necessary for every person with any sort of mental health need.

I have also worked with individuals with disabilities all of my adult life. Continuing to fund services such as the Developmental Disability Council, Family Voices, Autism Waiver, Fetal Alcohol Services, Special Education and so many more things is critical to leading happy, healthy lives. The people that benefit from these services want nothing else than to be a productive member of their community. They want to be healthy and happy like every other person in the state, country and world. They want the opportunity to make a difference. Let's give them the chance to do just that.

I urge you to pass HB 1012 to make ND the healthiest state in the nation.

Thank you for your time.

Chaz Brobst

chazbrophotos@gmail.com

701-320-0013