

SB 2305 Testimony
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
Senator Kathy Hogan
March 27, 2025

Chairman Vigessaa for the record, my name is Kathy Hogan. I represent District 21 which is central Fargo and a portion of West Fargo.

During the 68th legislative session, the ND legislature established a paid family caregiver pilot program to provide needed support to families who have members with serious illnesses or disability, both children and adults, who need extraordinary support to remain out of institutional care. Recognizing that these extraordinary supports need to be blended with other Medicaid waiver funding for in-home care services, this concept was challenging from the beginning for many reasons.

The Senate Human Services Committee received a summary of the guidelines for the pilot project and data on utilization that are uploaded in the testimony for this hearing. We also heard testimony from families on the amazing impacts this model had made for families with very seriously disabled members.

Paralleling the work on the Family Caregiver Pilot project is the effort to improve coordinated and access for children and adults with disabilities through other waived services, including the DD and HCBS waiver by moving toward a Cross Disabilities Waiver concept that is still being designed. This effort will improve flexibility for people being supported and their families by allowing greater service options so that you do not need to change waivers to get some services. It is anticipated that by June 30, 2027, the Cross-Disability Waivers will be ready for implementation and that this program will be integrated into those services.

Because this was a unique pilot project funded with state dollars, the program design was both put on a fast track with limited funding. What we learned very quickly was there was a much greater need than we anticipated. The pilot project was not included in the Governor's 2025-2027 budget.

After the first hearing in the Senate Human Service Committee, a small working group of various parties reviewed all the data that is uploaded in the testimony on the FAQ on the program, the program data and spending pattern. The group included DHHS staff, advocates and family members and reviewed several funding recommendation options. The materials we looked at are attached to this testimony.

In preparing the fiscal note we worked from a spreadsheet of funding options for your consideration. The first column reflects the estimated cost to continue the program for existing families, the second column reflects the costs for all those who have application appeals pending and the last column is the number of applications that are on the waiting list. The group recommended that we request \$9 million to continue services to those already enrolled, and some of those with pending appeals. We did not recommend that all those on the wait list be funded because of the fiscal note. The Appropriations Committee changed the funding to \$7.3 million to continue services to existing families and partially fund families when appeals have been finalized. If this bill is not funded, 70 seriously disabled individuals and their families will face an immediate crisis which could result in needing to move to institutional care such as Anne Carlsen or long-term care facilities.

Your Human Services Committee recommended to pass on this request because of its success. The Senate Appropriations Committee supported this bill and the funding. Your House Human Services Committee recommended do pass and so here we are.

Thank you for considering SB 2305 and I am more than willing to answer any questions.