

March 5, 2025

North Dakota House of Representatives  
House Human Service Committee  
Representative Matt Ruby, Chair

RE: Testimony and Support of Senate Bill 2171

Dear Chair and Members of the North Dakota House of Representatives Human Service Committee.

My name is David Zibolski. I am a 40-year law enforcement professional and Chief of Police for the Fargo Police Department. Prior to taking the position as chief in Fargo, I served in both state and local law enforcement agencies in the state of Wisconsin.

I offer my testimony to you today in strong support for Senate Bill 2171. This bill addresses a serious gap in mental health services to those suffering from mental health issues, which adversely affects our communities across North Dakota. Under current law an individual may only be held under emergency detention for a 24 hour period. Mental health professionals will affirm that is rarely a long enough timeframe to fully evaluate an individual's mental health needs, especially those with significant chronic issues. Under the current scheme these individuals are quickly evaluated at a local facility and often released in a short period of time placing them back in the cycle of mental health crisis and continuing a revolving door approach.

As I am sure you are aware, the mental health crisis in North Dakota is emblematic of a national issue. While much has been done to provide first line outpatient type of treatment services the reverse is not true for those who suffer from extreme and chronic mental health issues, but are left to walk the streets of our cities for lack of adequate facilities. While a complicated issue, this bill would assist greatly in leveraging the facility space that does exist in order to provide an effective timeframe to evaluate and identify more appropriate treatment plans for many of these individuals.

This issue is not only impactful to those suffering and the communities they live in, but also to our police officers. In Fargo our Intelligence and Analysis Unit started tracking mental health calls for service in late 2022. A mental health call for service is a call that comes into our 911 center in a variety of different ways, to include some type of disturbance, criminal activity, unusual or concerning activity, or citizens fearful for their safety. Our officers respond to these calls and through their training are able to identify whether we have actual criminal activity occurring or we have someone in a mental health crisis. In each one of these cases they have to apply their crisis intervention and de-escalation skills in attempting to gain the cooperation of the individual so that they may be placed into an emergency detention status and/or referred to the proper services by working with our local partners. This can be challenging for the officers mental health as well, especially when they are dealing with the same individual with significant chronic

mental health issues day in and day out because, they are simply brought in and released in a short period of time.


The number of calls for service that fall under this category and the amount of time and personnel required to safely mitigate them is enormous and takes our personnel away from other public safety functions. In 2024 the Fargo Police Department responded to 3,500 calls for service that were mental health related. Because these situations are difficult and dangerous multiple units are often needed to resolve the situation. In 2024 7,867 Fargo Police units were involved in the 3,500 calls for service.

As you can see in the attached data, 15 individuals accounted for 465 (13%) of the 3,500 mental health related calls for service. Additionally, 470 (28%) of the total group were involved in more than one metal health related call for service. It is without question that the needs of these individuals are not being met and the strain operationally and mentally on our officers continues to increase while the community perception often becomes one of fear.

While additional mental health work will still be needed, Senate Bill 2171 provides significant progress and opportunity to address these significant mental health needs in our community by allowing more appropriate time for mental health evaluation and leveraging existing facilities for that purpose.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today in strongly encourage you to motion Senate Bill 2171 as "do pass."

Respectfully,

  
David B. Zibolski  
Chief of Police

3,497 Mental Health Related Calls For Service in 2024

- 7,867 police units responded or were involved in these incidents
- 465 (13%) of the CFS involved the top 15 individuals listed —————>
- 470 (28%) of the individuals were involved in more than one MH related CFS
- 1,182 (72%) of the individuals were involved in only one MH related CFS

| Top 15 in 2024 YTD    | MH CFS Count |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| [REDACTED]            | 58           |
| [REDACTED] (Deceased) | 44           |
| [REDACTED]            | 41           |
| [REDACTED] (Deceased) | 39           |
| [REDACTED]            | 38           |
| [REDACTED]            | 33           |
| [REDACTED]            | 32           |
| [REDACTED]            | 31           |
| [REDACTED]            | 26           |
| [REDACTED]            | 22           |
| [REDACTED]            | 21           |
| [REDACTED]            | 21           |
| [REDACTED]            | 20           |
| [REDACTED]            | 20           |
| [REDACTED]            | 19           |

Call time approximations:

*\* Calculated duration from when the call was created, to when the call was closed*  
*\* Cannot take into account the unique call duration per officer involved*  
*\* Cannot take into account the length of time between when the call was created, to dispatched, enroute, or on scene time*

- Over approximation (overall call duration x number of responding police units)  
Approx. **6,116** hours amongst all officers involved were spent on MH CFS (equivalent to **254** days)
- Under approximation (only overall call duration)  
Approx. **2,490** hours amongst all officers involved were spent on MH CFS (equivalent to **103** days)
- Average MH CFS duration was **49** minutes

