

House Human Services
SB 2305
March 12th, 2025

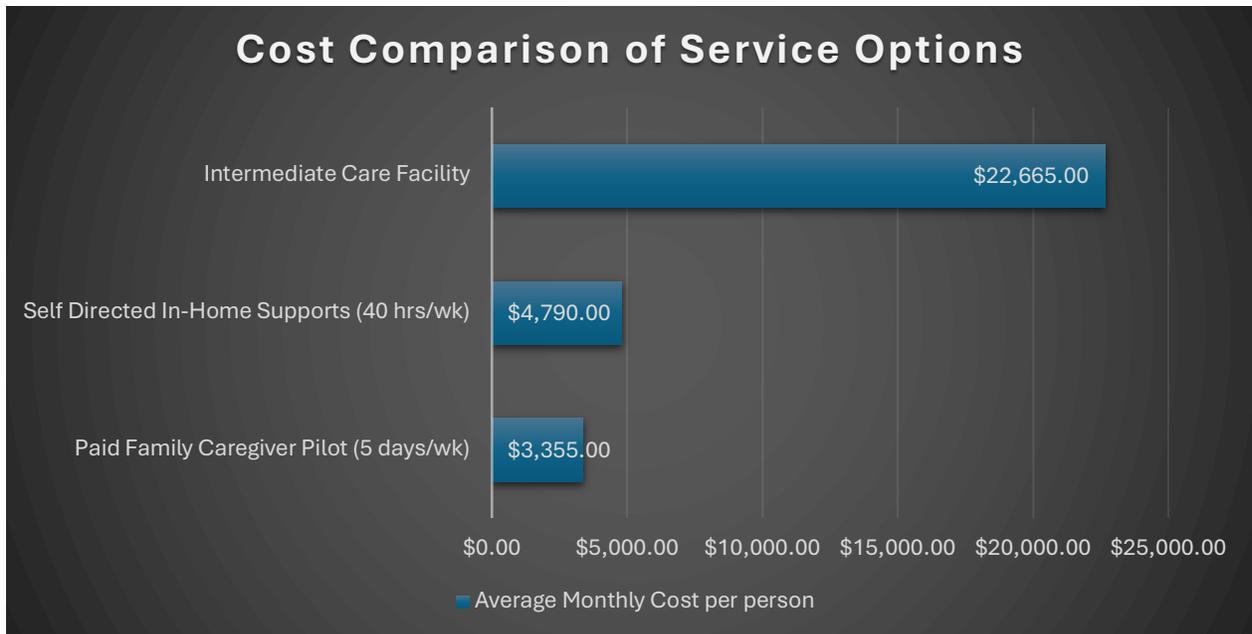
Chairman Ruby and members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Katynka Morrissette and I live in Bismarck, ND with my husband and our 3 young children. I am here today to give testimony on why I support SB 2305 and share with you how it impacts our family. I am the primary caregiver to our three young children Joey (age 9), Medrick (age 8), and Eleanor (age 7), who are on the Medically Fragile Waiver. They require extraordinary care due to their metabolic condition and other complexities.

Daily they require multiple doses of medications and nutritional support administered through their G or G/J tube, a complex feeding schedule and diet, glucose and ketone checks, breathing treatments, care for their medical ports, and assistance with home therapy treatment plans and daily living activities. Due to their high level of need and how specialized some of these cares are, we have been unable to find appropriately trained staff to provide support for them.

In 2023 legislation was passed (SB 2276) that developed the Paid Family Caregiver Pilot Program in North Dakota. Our family has been able to participate in the program and see firsthand the benefits that have resulted, like decreased hospital stays and improved mental health.

Paid family caregiving offers multiple clear benefits: it supports families, reduces reliance on institutional care facilities, and ensures individuals with disabilities can stay in their own communities with proper support. Reducing institutional care also has financial benefits, as shown in the chart below comparing service options for individuals.



While I could never put a dollar amount on the health and wellbeing of a child, and no parent ever wants to be faced with the possibility of placing their child in a care facility, this unfortunately is the reality many in our state have faced and will continue to if we don't work to provide the services

these children need. With caregiver turnover and workforce shortages across the state, many people are going without the services they are assessed for and authorized to receive.

A while back our oldest son had commented about how he is no longer afraid of getting sick from food other people give him, because one mistake in his diet has many consequences for him. Today he is actually in bed with multiple symptoms and sores in his mouth, because of an emergency need to leave him with someone who accidentally gave him unsafe food. It only takes one slip up and oversight to have lasting consequence for individuals with extraordinary care needs. The years of experience and training from his care team have allowed me to be the best caregiver for him and Senate Bill 2305 places value and recognition on the care that I provide.

We as caregivers know our children best and have training to provide these specialized cares, and it is crucial for this pilot to continue as the department works to get it implemented into the current waivers as a service option so that we can be a part of that workforce.

Thank you for your time today and allowing me to share with you some of the impact this pilot has had on our family, I am asking for a “Do Pass” recommendation on Senate Bill 2305 so that families in our state can access this service option with the improvements learned through the pilot program and fill the caregiver shortage that so many have experienced. I will now answer any questions you may have for me.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Katynka Morrissette

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