

**Health Services Legislative Interim Committee
Testimony
Senator Judy Lee - Chairman
October 26, 2011**

Good afternoon Chairman Lee and members of the Health Services Interim Committee, my name is Tom Regan. I am a member of the Mental Health America of ND (MHAND) Board of Directors. I am here to present testimony on behalf of MHAND related to the health care needs of the state, specifically the behavioral (mental health and substance use) needs.

MHAND is concerned about the lack of a formal comprehensive plan to address the behavioral health needs of the citizens of ND. In the documentary *Resolana: Voice of the People*, recently produced by MHAND, Dr. Aaron Garman, Medical Services Director at Coal Country Community Health Center in Beulah states, "When an individual presents with chest pain, I can get them referred to a cardiologist in Bismarck within one week. When an individual presents with severe symptoms of depression, it takes a month to six weeks for a referral to a mental health provider in Bismarck." This is an example of the disparity in the delivery of and access to behavioral health services in ND when compared to other health issues such as heart disease, diabetes, etc.

MHAND advocates for ND to develop comprehensive plan to address the disparity in the delivery of and access to behavioral health services - a plan that includes the expansion of public and private relationships to better serve the consumer of mental health services and a plan that provides solutions such as an increase in tele-mental health care, implementation of strategies to integrate primary and behavioral health care throughout ND and an increase in the inclusion of behavioral health in the School of Medicine and Health Sciences Curriculum to better meet the needs of ND citizens living with behavioral health issues.

Thank you for your time.