

Testimony
Human Services Interim Committee
Representative Kathy Hogan, Chairman
May 11, 2016

Chairman Hogan and members of the committee, my name is Carlotta McCleary. I am the Executive Director for both Mental Health America of North Dakota and North Dakota Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. Today I speak on behalf of the Mental Health Advocacy Network (MHAN). MHAN advocates for a consumer/family driven mental health system of care that provides an array of service choices that are timely, responsive and effective.

MHAN has provided testimony during the last few interim committee meetings regarding our priorities. We have not changed our priorities. We still think that peer to peer and family support, consumer choice, diversion from corrections, a core services zero-reject model, and an independent appeals process serve as the backbone to correcting the crisis in North Dakota's behavioral health system.

In the time since MHAN started testifying on these issues, there has been a growing consensus that the status-quo must not be tolerated. Recently, the Interim Incarceration Issues Committee had been notified that more than two thirds of North Dakota judges have sentenced someone to prison—even if they were not a high-risk offender—in order to receive behavioral health services.

The legislature has commissioned multiple studies to research North Dakota's behavioral health system. They all make it resoundingly clear that this system is in crisis and drastic action must be taken. If the state wishes to know what direction North Dakota's behavioral health system must

take, we feel that the Schulte Report (which the legislature received in 2014) provides more than enough guidance. As such, I have attached the Schulte Report for your consideration. The people of North Dakota cannot afford to wait any longer. We are frequently asked if MHAN will seek litigation against the state of North Dakota. To that we respond: all options are on the table.

I would be happy to take any questions you have.

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