

Madam Chair Lee and the committee;

My name is Krisanna Peterson from Bismarck. I am speaking about HB1012.

Some of you may recognize me from speaking at the House and the Senate during the 2017 session, I want to thank you for adding this to your intern committee. I am here to speak on the importance of changing Medicaid in ND. As it stands children with mental illness are excluded from ND Medicaid plan. I have tried every angle to get this covered. I have spoken to every advocacy group and to many state Legislatures like yourself. I have attended every training available. Believe me there is no way. There is no way to get my son on Medicaid because we make too much money. I am a very creative person. I have tried to qualify for a waiver program. Unfortunately DD waiver excludes mental illness. They couldn't even use that in his qualifications. He met almost two of the qualifications. You need three to qualify. I believe that if they included mental illness that my son would be covered. He is only 10 years old I know he will have a serious mental illness. This doesn't go away. Mental illness is a lifetime illness. You see if he would have been diagnosed before age 3 years old maybe he could be on Medicaid. You cannot get a mental health diagnosis until about 5 years from any doctor for a mental illness. During my many discussions with Legislators, many assumed that because I have a child with mental illness we are poor but we are not. We work hard and do the best we can for our child. Mental illness is an illness. Just like any other illness, I personally think it's one of the worse illnesses one can have. When you have severe mental illness it's not only hard for the patient but all the loved ones. It needs to be treated as an illness in ND. Families like mine are suffering due to the state's priorities. A Facebook quote from Senator Mathern dated April 3, 2017: "The behavioral health crisis was something nearly every single candidate and elected official discussed as a top priority during the 2016 election. Slashing recommended funding for behavioral health from \$28 million to \$200,000 doesn't exactly amount to fulfilling the campaign promises that were made. Most importantly, the fact that behavioral health was such a relevant issue during the past election should indicate what a crucial priority it is for our families and our communities."

I know in my district Senate Dever in an article from the Bismarck Tribune dated Oct 24th, 2016 stated "There's no doubt that there's going to be a challenge. This

is the best time to approach the behavioral health, If we make it about money, we will fail. If we make it about people, we will succeed.”

I personally don't see how it improved for my family. The last several years of our state being one of the richest states to the poorest due to the oil boom has caused great issues for my family. I am exhausted mentally and physically. I have tried to make time for myself but unfortunately I am so burnt out I am not sure I will be able to work. When you are burnt out you get sick easier. You need to take care of yourself before you can take care of others. When you take someone and push them over the edge without any help what can they do next. What have I considered is moving to MN or Canada. MN has great plans for people with mental illness. I ask that you contact them. I have talked to my brother who works in MN as addiction counselor. He explained the different plans for me. After hearing about it I think the committee should get someone from MN here to talk about their different plans and how they work.

Rylan Rogers from Family Voices of Indiana stated “ Medicaid is the largest source of funding nationwide for mental health services”. So what does this mean. It means that almost every state has found way to get Medicaid to individuals with behavioral health disorders except for ND. According to the data from 2015 the National Alliance on Mental health “Mental Illness Is Common - of North Dakota’s approximately 600,000 residents, close to 24,000 adults live with serious mental illness and about 6,000 children live with serious mental health conditions. Another option is increasing the buy in medicaid plan. At this time is 200% poverty level. When you have a child with a disability everything your life is more expensive than others.

Another option that's a quick fix is to rewrite DD qualifications so in the meantime families like mine do not fall apart. Why did we have a Schulte Report if nothing is going to change. I can't wait for you meet again in next legislative session. I need help now. The earlier you reach these kids the better. I hear everyday how we do not have enough foster families in the state of ND. Many of these parents could still have their kids if the state would give them the support they need. Some would not be using illegal substances if they found a better way to deal with their mental health, and lastly some people are due to for having supports in place. The worst case scenario is suicide. According to the National Alliance on Mental health-

“Untreated Mental Illness has Deadly and Costly Consequences - In 2015, 137 North Dakotans died by suicide. For every one life lost to suicide, at least 25 people attempt it. Suicide is second-leading cause of death among youth aged 10-24 in North Dakota. Over 90 percent of individuals who die from suicide have at least one mental illness.” I will not forget my classmate at age 16 who committed suicide due to mental illness. Talk to my friend and co-worker about the loss of her amazing son who was lost to a suicide due to mental health. She cant get him back. He was amazing man. I wish I could have met him in person. The time is now. Stop ignoring what has been going on too long. Please add an option for medicaid for people with mental illness. People with mental illness can be and should be successful members of society.

Our entire family would be happier and healthier. Please consider a better future for all ND citizens. We are not bad parents or bad people because we have a mental health diagnosis. Mental Health is a genetic disorder. Let's all learn to have acceptance and understanding of Mental Health. Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

