

2023 SENATE HUMAN SERVICES

SB 2166

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee
Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

SB 2166
1/17/2023

Relating to an appropriation for a grant for substance use disorder and mental health recovery services.
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10:54 AM **Madam Chair Lee** called the hearing to order.
Senators Lee, Cleary, Clemens, K. Roers, Weston, and Hogan were present.

Discussion Topics:

- Celebrate Recovery program.
- Mental health
- Substance abuse
- Peer support and coordination
- Staff diversity

10:54 AM **Senator David, Clemens District 16**, introduced the bill in favor and proposed an amendment 23.0654.02001. #13835, 13836.

10:58 AM **Dale Wolf, Founding Pastor of Light House Church** in downtown Fargo, ND, testified in favor with proposed amendment. #13838.

11:04 AM **Tara Gilbert, Peer Support Specialist at Light House Church** testified in favor. #13841.

11:10 AM **Luiza Martin, with Peer Support and Peer Coordination** personal testified in favor #13842.

11:16 AM **Tim Bjornson, Peer Support Specialist Lighthouse Church personal testimony assistance with a Free Through Recovery** testified in favor #13846.

11:22 AM **Dale Wolf** provided verbal information.

11:29 AM **Pam Sagness, Behavioral Health Executive Director North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services**, testified neutrally. #13850.

11:43 AM **Madam Chair Lee** closed the hearing.

Patricia Lahr, Committee Clerk

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

SB 2166
1/24/2023

Relating to an appropriation for a grant for substance use disorder and mental health recovery services.
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3:43 **Madam Chair Lee** called the committee meeting to order. **Senators Lee, Cleary, Clemens, K. Roers, Weston, Hogan** are present.

Senator Cleary proposed amendment 23.0654.02002 #16465

Senator Clemens moved amendment 23.0654.02001 #13836

Senator Cleary seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote.

Senators	Vote
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator David A. Clemens	Y
Senator Kathy Hogan	Y
Senator Kristin Roers	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y

The motion passed 6-0-0.

Senator Cleary moved to adopt amendment LC 23.0654.02003 #16465

Senator Weston seconded the motion.

Roll call vote.

Senators	Vote
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator David A. Clemens	Y
Senator Kathy Hogan	Y
Senator Kristin Roers	N
Senator Kent Weston	Y

Motion passed 5-0-1.

Senator Hogan moved DO PASS as AMENDEDED and REFEFER to APPROPRIATIONS.

Senator Clemens seconded.

Roll call vote.

Senators	Vote
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator David A. Clemens	Y
Senator Kathy Hogan	Y
Senator Kristin Roers	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y

The motion passed 6-0-0.

Senator Clemens will carry SB 2166.

3:55 PM **Madam Chair Lee** closed the meeting.

Patricia Lahr, Committee Clerk

January 24, 2023

AK
1-24-23
(1-1)

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL NO. 2166

Page 1, line 5, after "**FUND**" insert "**- ONE-TIME FUNDING**"

Page 1, line 6, replace "\$2,000,000" with "\$3,000,000"

Page 1, line 7, remove "a grant to an"

Page 1, line 8, replace "organization that provides" with "grants to organizations that provide"

Page 1, line 10, after the period insert "The department of commerce shall collaborate with the department of health and human services to establish guidelines to provide grants under this section. This funding is considered a one-time funding item. To be eligible to receive a grant under this section, an organization must have provided peer support services to individuals with a substance use disorder, including those served through the federal Medicaid 1915(i) state plan amendment, during the calendar year ending on December 31, 2022."

Renumber accordingly

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SB 2166: Human Services Committee (Sen. Lee, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS AS FOLLOWS** and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** and **BE REREFERRED** to the **Appropriations Committee** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2166 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

Page 1, line 5, after "**FUND**" insert "**- ONE-TIME FUNDING**"

Page 1, line 6, replace "\$2,000,000" with "\$3,000,000"

Page 1, line 7, remove "a grant to an"

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Renumber accordingly

2023 SENATE APPROPRIATIONS

SB 2166

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations - Human Resources Division Roughrider Room, State Capitol

SB 2166
2/8/2023

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation for a grant for substance use disorder and mental health recovery services.

9:03 AM Vice chairman Davison opened the meeting. Members present: Senators Davison, Burckhard, Mathern Kreun. Absent: Senator Dever.

Discussion Topics:

- Lighthouse Recovery Organization
- Population
- Mental health & addictions
- Homelessness, poverty, despair & depression
- Medicaid 1915(i)
- ARPA funds
- Faith-based support
- Peer support recovery services
- Individualized goals

9:05 AM Senator David Clemens, District 16, introduced SB 2166, testified in favor. Testimony #19740

9:10 AM Dale Wolf, founding pastor of Lighthouse Church & Lighthouse Recovery Organization in Fargo, testified in favor. Testimony #19656

9:16 AM Claire Bullis, Peer Support Specialist at Lighthouse Church, Fargo, testified in favor. Testimony #19721

9:25 AM Pastor Wolf returned for questions.

9:38 AM Carl Young, ND resident & father, testified in favor. (No written testimony).

9:39 AM Sarah Otte Coleman, Director, ND Tourism & Marketing, clarified funding source. (No written testimony)

9:41 AM Chris Jones, HHS Commissioner, testified in favor. (No written testimony)

Additional Written Testimony:

Ethan Harsell, Testimony #19471

Kerry Leno, Testimony #19678

9:46 AM Vice chairman Davison closed meeting.

Susan Huntington, Committee Clerk

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations - Human Resources Division Roughrider Room, State Capitol

SB 2166
2/8/2023

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation for a grant for substance use disorder and mental health recovery services.

3:23 PM Chairman Dever opened the meeting.

Chairman Dever and Senators Burckhard, Davison, Kreun and Mathern are present.

Discussion Topics:

- Grants
- Vouchers
- Amendments
- Alternative funding methods

3:24 PM The committee had discussion on the bill.

3:40 Senator Davison moves to Do Not Pass the bill. Motion is seconded by Senator Kreun.

3:45 PM Roll call vote was taken.

Senators	Vote
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Curt Kreun	Y
Senator Tim Mathern	N

Motion Passes 4-1-0.

Senator Davison will carry the bill.

This bill does not affect workforce development.

3:46 PM Chairman Dever closed the meeting.

Rick Schuchard on behalf of Susan Huntington, Committee Clerk

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Appropriations Committee Roughrider Room, State Capitol

SB 2166
2/10/2023

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation for a grant for substance use disorder and mental health recovery services.

11:35 AM Chairman Bekkedahl opened the meeting.

Members present: **Senators Bekkedahl, Krebsbach, Burckhard, Davison, Dever, Dwyer, Kreun, Meyer, Roers, Schaible, Sorvaag, Vedaa, Wanzek, Rust, and Mathern.**

Members Absent: **Senator Erbele**

Discussion Topics:

- Committee action

11:36 AM Senator Davison introduced the bill verbally.

11:38 AM Senator Davison moved DO NOT PASS

11:38 AM Senator Kreun seconded.

Roll call vote.

11:40 AM Roll call vote Senators	Vote
Senator Brad Bekkedahl	Y
Senator Karen K. Krebsbach	Y
Senator Randy A. Burckhard	Y
Senator Kyle Davison	Y
Senator Dick Dever	Y
Senator Michael Dwyer	Y
Senator Robert Erbele	A
Senator Curt Kreun	Y
Senator Tim Mathern	N
Senator Scott Meyer	Y
Senator Jim P. Roers	Y
Senator Donald Schaible	Y
Senator Ronald Sorvaag	Y
Senator Shawn Vedaa	Y
Senator Terry M. Wanzek	Y
Senator Rust	Y

Passed 14-1-1

Senator Davison will carry the bill.

11:41 AM Chairman Bekkedahl closed the meeting

Peter Gualandri on behalf of Kathleen Hall, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SB 2166, as engrossed: Appropriations Committee (Sen. Bekkedahl, Chairman) recommends **DO NOT PASS** (14 YEAS, 1 NAY, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). Engrossed SB 2166 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

TESTIMONY

SB 2166

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

SB 2166

INTRODUCED BY

SEN DAVID CLEMENS

DISTRICT 16

I am here to introduce SB 2166.

This proposal has been submitted on behalf of Lighthouse Recovery Organization of Fargo, ND. The bill is requesting funds from the State Fiscal Recovery Fund to the Department of Commerce to financially support this organization in a community and at a time that has seen a dramatic increase in mental health and substance use crises.

The Lighthouse is meeting the needs in our state related to long term support for people suffering from substance use disorder and various mental health disorders, services for state programs Free Through Recovery and Community Connect, Peer Support Services for people struggling with various behavioral health issues, community based support and networking with the F/M homeless population, and is striving to provide a variety of services to meet the growing population serviced by the ND Medicaid Billable 1915i program.

This concludes my introduction, and I would ask for a Do Pass consideration on SB 2166.

Respectfully submitted,

Sen David Clemens

Introduced by

Senators Clemens, Paulson, Piepkorn

Representatives Koppelman, Satrom

1 A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation for a grant for substance use disorder and mental
2 health recovery services.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1. APPROPRIATION - DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE - FEDERAL STATE**
5 **FISCAL RECOVERY FUND.** There is appropriated from federal funds derived from the state
6 fiscal recovery fund, not otherwise appropriated, the sum of \$2,000,000, or so much of the sum
7 as may be necessary, to the department of commerce for the purpose of providing a grant to an
8 organization that provides recovery and support services for individuals with a substance use
9 disorder, other mental health disorder, or combination of disorders, for the biennium beginning
10 July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2025. To be eligible to receive a grant under this section, an
11 organization must have provided peer support services to individuals with a substance use
12 disorder, including those served through the federal Medicaid 1915(i) state plan amendment,
13 during the year ended December 31, 2022.

23.0654.02001
Title.

Prepared by the Legislative Council staff for
Senator Clemens
January 16, 2023

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL NO. 2166

Page 1, line 10, after the period insert "To be eligible to receive a grant under this section, an organization must have provided peer support services to individuals with a substance use disorder, including those served through the federal Medicaid 1915(i) state plan amendment, during the year ended December 31, 2022."

Re-number accordingly

Dale Wolf

District 21-02

Senate Bill NO. 2166

My name is Dale Wolf and I am the founding pastor of Lighthouse Church in downtown Fargo. The Lighthouse is a recovery-based ministry that strives to provide a place of love, encouragement, hope and recovery for anyone seeking help. Recovery is defined broadly at Lighthouse. People recover from many things in life. Lighthouse has a basic spiritual philosophy that every individual is created by God and should be valued. At Lighthouse, people can come as they are and be welcomed, accepted, and find support.

As you may know, our metropolitan community of Fargo has seen a significant uptick in substance use and mental health issues. I know that is not unique to Fargo. We have seen many changes in the community and social services provided to the people we serve. The Lighthouse has found itself at the center of striving to address this growing crisis.

As a Recovery Community Organization (RCO), the Lighthouse houses a variety of anonymous groups (NA, AA, Al Anon, SA, RA), support groups for various mental health issues (depression, anxiety, abuse), and a thriving Celebrate Recovery program. Lighthouse also has regular church programs as well as children's and youth ministry. The general population of Lighthouse Church, and the Lighthouse RCO is under-resourced.

Over my years of serving in leadership at the Lighthouse I have seen and learned much. Daily I encounter the challenges of substance use disorder and mental health issues. I have seen the barriers that people face when they want to improve their lives. I have seen the pain and cost of isolation and loneliness. I have seen the reality that there is no easy or quick fix. Recovery and life change is a long-term journey and investment. I often remind our staff that we are in a marathon with people, not a sprint. I have also seen the universal need for love and acceptance and hope. In order to begin the recovery process, people need to establish a foundation of support, accountability, and help. Lighthouse has and is providing these things and more for countless individuals. I have also witnessed life change, growth, and miracles every week. **(You will hear more about that in a couple of minutes.)**

Lighthouse has been a provider for the North Dakota programs Free Through Recovery and Community Connect since their beginning. We have been honored to partner with the state to provide services to hundreds of men and women in these programs over the years. We have strived for excellence in both care coordination and peer support service and have developed a great reputation, not only in our own community, but across the state. We have also sought to bring the Lighthouse into the North Dakota Correctional Facilities. Today, our Sunday services are shown in three correctional facilities in ND, and we hope to expand that in the near future.

When we learned about the program 1915i, and the same services we had been providing becoming Medicaid billable, we decided to get involved. Our goal has never been to make money, but to help people. The higher levels of service provided for in 1915i is something sorely needed. We see it every day. We made the investment to enroll, register staff to be able to provide service, learned and strived to adapt to the administrative requirements and challenges, and were amongst the first to get started. As of today, I believe we are still the only provider billing for 1915i peer support services in the state. We believe the program hinges on peer support and it is the crucial link to the overall life-change and growth for the people we serve.

Unfortunately, we have learned that there are barriers for smaller, non-traditional providers like us to become established in providing the various 1915i services needed in our community. In order to continue to meet the growing crisis we are honored to be here with the hopes that you see the value in partnering with an organization like us who are on the front line in this difficult, but important work.

We are seeking funding to help us meet the variety of services in the current programs we work with, but particularly 1915i. The complexity of providing services and billing Medicaid for 1915i is significant. We find the billing procedures and the policy requirements to be substantial, and more than we were prepared for administratively. Requested funds will first be utilized to organizationally develop the administrative capacity to grow our programs as the demand grows. Support is also needed to expand our peer support services to address the diverse population we serve. Current reimbursement rates make it nearly impossible to do so. That is the reason for a proposed amendment to the bill.

We are also seeking to administratively organize in such a way so as to better link our state services along with the Lighthouse RCO and developing services for those in need. We would like to expand our peer support services to be able to serve the needs of people who are not eligible for reimbursed services, or who are simply unable to make the step towards such services at this time. We see a growing need for mental health support in our community and are aware that therapists and medical professionals refer people to us for basic support and assistance. We would like to develop supportive services around the growing mental health crisis. Finally, in addition to other programs and outreach, we would like to increase our efforts in the correctional facilities of North Dakota and bring the same kind of encouragement and hope people find at Lighthouse to those incarcerated.

I thank you for your time and your consideration, and I look forward to answering any questions you might have. But first, I would like you to hear from three of the Lighthouse family I brought with me today.

Tara Gilbert

District 21-02

Senate Bill NO. 2166

My name is Tara Gilbert, and I was released from prison on July 3rd, 2017. I did not have anyone helping me navigate how to be successful after prison. I did not have anyone helping me navigate the court system to try and regain custody of my 6 children; which involved dealing with Indian Child Welfare. I did not have anyone helping me prove that I would continue to make positive choices in my life and that I was worthy of parenting my children. I did not have anyone educating me on past trauma, and how it affects mental health. I was riddled with guilt and shame because as mother to those six children, I was the one person that was supposed to protect them, keep them safe, and I failed at that. I felt I was the person who had hurt them the most. I had no support system, no hope, and most important of all, I had no faith. Looking back on that time, I was lost and completely alone.

I became a Peer Support Specialist at Lighthouse Church in 2019. At the time, I wanted to help other women coming out of prison and treatment find hope and faith. I wanted women to know that they do not have to be defined by their past. I wanted to help them find out who they are as women, find out who they are as moms, and find out how to be a productive member of the community. Becoming a Peer Support Specialist started me on a journey of self-discovery that I was not prepared for. Being open, honest and vulnerable about my past with the women that I work with, offers them hope.

People in the programs we work with are offered a trained peer who truly knows where they are at. At the same time, peer supports specialists themselves have the opportunity for continued healing of their own. Peer Supports often share pieces of ourselves that we have not shared with even those closest to us. It is in those intimate moments that the hurt and pain of our past benefits an individual who is struggling in the present. Those are the moments that have kept me in peer support for the past four years. When a participant finds their worth and changes begin, that is the time where we can see community impact.

A year ago, to satisfy the 1915i State Amendment provider requirements, I was tasked with leading the Lighthouse Peer Supports. Having worked with the state programs for over four years, I have seen the needs of the individuals we work with change. In addition to substance use disorders, we are working with individuals with significant mental health issues, needing a higher level of care. Sometimes the mental health issues affecting the individuals we support go beyond our lived experiences. We see a need to increase the diversity of our Peer Support team. Organizationally we see a high level of need for training and quality administrative support for our Peer Support Specialists.

As the only organization billing for 1915i peer support services at this time, we are still learning. We are requesting funding to diversify our staff and to provide educational opportunities to satisfy provider requirements. We are committed to providing the highest level of care to participants in any and all of the programs we work with. I have personally seen the life-changing impact of effective work performed by Peer Support Specialists with individuals, who when left on their own may have slipped through the cracks in the system. This funding, if approved for Lighthouse Church, is truly for the participants we serve.

We understand the value of peer support specialists who have lived experiences with a variety of life issues including traumatic brain injury, food issues, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideations, as well as substance use disorder. Due to the recovery community that the Lighthouse provides, we have often been fortunate enough to hire Peer Support Specialists from our own recovery community. Lighthouse is a community of individuals walking alongside each other on a journey. We watch each other fall and celebrate each other's victories, and we stand here today with our heads held high, anxiety riddling our bones, and testify to the changes these programs have made in our lives.

After prison, it took me two years of navigating life on my own to make it to the Lighthouse Church Recovery Community. I am a Native American woman, and church was not something we did in our home growing up. I stand before you today filled to the brim in my Christian faith to say that had it not been for the opportunities afforded me by

Lighthouse Church and being a Peer Support Specialist, I would not be here today to testify that change is possible, and neither would my friend, Luiza who I have had the privilege of working with.

Luiza Martin

District 21-02

Senate Bill NO. 2166

My name is Luiza Martin, and it is with great honor that I get to share with you all what Peer Support through 1915i has done for me.

I started attending Lighthouse Church in Fargo a little bit before Christmas of 2019. I used to live in West Fargo and attended church in West Fargo till then. When I moved out of the group home in West Fargo to an apartment in downtown Fargo, I was recommended to attend other churches in the recovery community. The churches I tried to attend didn't fit my needs and it was too large for my comfort so the search for a new church started.

Lighthouse Church was just what I needed. It was a church a little bit less full of people therefore unlike large churches, I felt immediately at home. I've been judged by most churches, but at the Lighthouse I was accepted and welcomed with open arms. I felt for the first time included in church. This church met my needs for love, acceptance and support as well as having a good understanding of recovery. For this reason, I have been attending Lighthouse ever since 2019.

I was approved for the 1915i program last year in March. At that time, I struggled to keep up with personal hygiene and maintain cleanliness of my home. I entered the program with a WHODAS score of 59.

Having Care Coordination along with Peer Support helped me tremendously. In the program we targeted the hygiene and the maintenance of my home as well as crisis intervention.

At the beginning of my involvement in 1915i, I was a frequent patient at psych hospitals and the number of times I was hospitalized decreased dramatically in the past few months.

From April 2022 to May 2022, I had 5 psychiatric hospital stays. I'm proud to say that I have been out of the hospital and successfully utilizing my personal as well as professional support and stayed out of the hospital and in the community for a few months. The length of time inpatient also decreased with each visit.

It was a long road of tough work. I worked hard to get to where I am today. Through the program of 1915i I have been able to successfully maintain the satisfactory cleanliness of my home as well as combat any emotional triggers around showering regularly.

Within the last month, I have been doing both without needing prompting. My goal for showering was 2 showers a week. I am proud to say I have accomplished this and exceeded it.

Another task I struggle with is consistently taking my meds. Prior to 1915i I have been sporadic with med compliance. I am also proud to say that I have been consistent for the past half month.

Through assistance from Peer Support, I am currently standing with a WHODAS score of 43.4. This is huge progress in just 10 months.

Lighthouse has helped me make memories that I would not be able to do successfully without their support. Within the last few months, I have been able to host Thanksgiving dinner for the very first time, something that would have not been able to be accomplished due to the stress and possible panic attacks that accompany stressful situations. I have been able to attend recovery meetings and bible studies almost on a daily basis. Doing so has helped me remain stable and sober. Due to my stability, I've been able to give back to my recovery community by volunteering to help in Sunday School at Lighthouse.

Peer Support and Peer Coordination is a vital part of client success with goals being accomplished.

Timothy Bjornson

District 21-02

Senate Bill NO. 2166

My name is Tim. I am an addict. My journey of addiction started when I was 16. I had a great upbringing but that didn't stop me from wanting to chase the world I was sheltered from. I was rebellious and I ran with a bad crowd. I started abusing my ADHD medication. I partied with my friends on weekends. I saw nothing wrong with it at the time. I didn't think that these choices would lead to over a decade of self-destruction, broken relationships, and legal trouble.

When I was 19, I found myself in a situation where I was given a choice. Use meth to prove I wasn't a nark or get shot. I did what they wanted me to do. I was hooked right away. Over the next decade I went through hell and back several times over. There were times that I would fight to stay off the hard drugs. I tried everything I could think of. Relocation didn't work, blocking phone numbers or using friends didn't work, and willpower alone wouldn't keep me clean. In 2016 I caught my first felony possession charge. I was put on probation. Now I HAD to stay clean. Nothing I had tried in the past worked. I needed to try something new. So, I went to an NA meeting at Lighthouse Church. I didn't know it at the time, but my childhood pastor was now the pastor of this church. I caught up with him and told him some of my story. He started to explain to me what Lighthouse was about. He invited me to other church functions and right away I found an area where I could be of service with the church band. I started going to recovery meetings and making new friends that would be positive influences in my life.

When Lighthouse became a Free Through Recovery provider, I was still on probation, so I signed up. At the time I was not doing well. I knew I needed some extra support. While receiving services I was in a cycle of relapse, jail, rehab, and back into recovery. My Peer Support and Care Coordinator and the extended support system I had at Lighthouse never gave up on me. Not even when I had given up on myself. Every time I came back broken and defeated, I was welcomed back with open arms and no judgement. That to me is one of the best things about Lighthouse. Addicts tend to give up on themselves when they are spiraling towards rock bottom. Society tends to view addicts as lepers as they were viewed 2000 years ago. They see an unclean lost cause and turn their backs on them. Lighthouse is staffed by people who know how it feels to be that broken individual that society has written off. Having so many people that were always there to remind me that I am more than my hurts, habits, and hang-ups and that my life is worth fighting for was crucial. The support I received there inspired me to help others.

On February 12th of 2021 I was arrested. Since that day I have remained clean and sober. I entered an intensive long term rehab program. Once I was back out in society for several months, I was offered a job as a peer support specialist. I have been working for Lighthouse since May of 2022. I work with people who are going through struggles that I have been through and overcame. I often hear our participants say that they don't know what they would do without us. I recall saying the same thing to my peer support. These programs offer a very necessary level of care that so many people need to overcome their life struggles. I would likely be dead or in prison right now if it wasn't for the love and support, I found in these programs when I was struggling. That's why I joined in this fight. Nobody

should be left to suffer from mental health issues, or substance use disorders. But sadly, they do. There is an epidemic in this country that has claimed so many lives. I've lost count of how many friends I lost to overdose or suicide. My mission in life is to fight for those that are still here.

This cause doesn't stand a chance without programs like the ones we at Lighthouse work with. Since I started this job, I have watched men and women start over with nothing, find employment, then housing and a vehicle. I've seen parents reunited with their children. A few months ago, I had the honor of presenting one of my participants with his one-year sobriety chip. I have seen people completely transform their lives with the help of these programs. It is my hope and prayer that through our stories you will see the value in the work we do at Lighthouse. We are a small organization in need of your help to continue helping people. Thank you for letting me share my story with you today.



Testimony
Senate Bill No.2166
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Lee, Chairman
January 17, 2023

Chairman Lee, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Pam Sagness, Executive Director of the Behavioral Health Division with the Department of Health and Human Services' (Department), Behavioral Health Division. I appear before you to provide neutral testimony for Senate Bill No. 2166.

In order to avoid duplication in administration of funding for behavioral health services and supports, the Department would recommend the funds are appropriated to the Department of Health and Human Services' Behavioral Health Division to administer grants rather than the Department of Commerce (see line 7).

The Department recommends the language on lines 7 and 8, "providing a grant to an organization" be revised to "providing grants to organizations", to support multiple grants.

The Department also requests there be additional clarity provided regarding the purpose of the funding and clarity that the grant funding cannot be used for existing services or services in which there is another funding source available.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.

23.0654.02002
Title.

Prepared by the Legislative Council staff for
the Senate Human Services Committee
January 24, 2023

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO SENATE BILL NO. 2166

Page 1, line 5, after "**FUND**" insert "**- ONE-TIME FUNDING**"

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Page 1, line 7, remove "a grant to an"

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Page 1, line 10, after the period insert "The department of commerce shall collaborate with the department of health and human services to establish guidelines to provide grants under this section. This funding is considered a one-time funding item."

Re-number accordingly

Chairman Lee, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee,
I want to give a written testimony about the bill regarding requesting funds from the State Recovery Fund to the Department of Commerce for the Lighthouse organization. This organization has been providing vital support to the Fargo community during a time of increased crisis in mental health and substance use. The Lighthouse has been offering long term support for those suffering from substance use disorder and mental health disorders through their services such as Free Through Recovery, Community Connect, and Peer Support Services.

An appropriation for a grant for substance use disorder and mental health recovery services is a critical investment in the well-being of our communities. Substance abuse and mental health challenges impact individuals and families across the state, and it is imperative that we provide accessible and effective support for recovery.

Investing in these services has a positive impact on public health and safety. Substance use and mental health disorders can lead to a range of negative outcomes, including increased crime, decreased productivity, and strained healthcare systems. By providing resources for individuals to access treatment and support, we can reduce the burden of these challenges on our communities. Success is access. Please give a "Do Pass" recommendation.

Thank you,

Ethan Harsell, District 43

Dale Wolf
District 21-02
Senate Bill NO. 2166

My name is Dale Wolf and I am the founding pastor of Lighthouse Church in downtown Fargo. The Lighthouse is a recovery-based ministry that strives to provide a place of love, encouragement, hope and recovery for anyone seeking help. The Lighthouse is a large and diverse Recovery Community Organization. We have also worked with the state of North Dakota to provide services for Free Through Recovery, Community Connect, and most recently Medicaid billable 1915i services. We have been honored to serve in these programs as a faith-based organization and one that is involved in the day to day, difficult and often messy work in what is a growing and evolving metropolitan community.

A number of us have already provided testimony to the Senate Human Services Committee, including individuals who have personally benefited from these services. I know you already have this testimony, so it is not my intention to duplicate what has already been provided to you.

Today I would like to offer a word of challenge to you, the appropriations committee, but also to the entire legislature. I am a person in long term recovery. My personal struggles have led me to start the Lighthouse. Recovery principles have not only shaped my life, but today it serves as the foundation of our Lighthouse ministry. I've been a pastor my whole adult life, but have largely been shielded from the world I now live in. In my work I now walk with people experiencing the depths of despair and powerlessness over addictions to substances. I now work in the world of chronic homelessness, generational poverty, and life controlling mental health issues. I am witness to the barriers that stand before men and women who desire to change their life and I see the day-to-day struggle to simply survive. Frankly, I had no idea.

But the Lighthouse has become a beacon of light and hope for so many people. Every week I witness miracles. The first apartment for a person in their 40's. A year of sobriety for someone after decades of substance abuse. A mom who has turned her life around and is reunited with her children and is working to support them. After years of incarceration, a real job, and the embracing of

responsibilities that at one time were avoided. A man with severe social anxiety and the complexity of issues that accompany it, now making friends and wondering if this is what it means to be happy.

I don't believe the government can do what we do at the Lighthouse. But you can help organizations like the Lighthouse do what we do best. From a faith-based perspective, we are the hands and feet of Jesus. From a more secular standpoint, we are using our lived experience to help others who need our help. We are not trying to make a profit. We are not doing anything extravagant. We just try and help people who come to our community organization or choose to work with us in the various state programs we work with.

My assessment of what the state of North Dakota has done in creating the programs we work with is ingenious. They are fairly inexpensive programs compared to the cost of incarcerating individuals, frequent hospitalizations, or fostering people's kids. Instead, we are helping people not only become stable members of society, but tax paying, contributing members of society. We are helping to raise the standard of life for many of the least of these in our community.

The challenge is that to do it well costs money. Small organizations like the Lighthouse, who are on the front lines of this work, are often unprepared to administratively tackle the requirements and expectations as providers of these government programs. That is especially true of Medicaid billable 1915i. This has been a steep learning curve for us. We jumped in to provide services with great hope and optimism. But there have been numerous challenges. Reimbursement rates and referral numbers have not been adequate to sustain an organization like the Lighthouse in this important work. My concern, if not us, then who will be able to provide these services?

My understanding is that the bill before you seeks to use Covid disaster funds for grants to meet some of the behavioral health needs that have multiplied many times over in just these last years. Changes in behavioral health services and the emergence of the programs we are working with have moved more and more individuals facing serious issues out into the community and into places like the Lighthouse. In my last testimony I detailed some of the ways we would use these

funds to help the people of our community and state. My plea is that you help us in this important work.

My experience in creating Lighthouse is that the best work amongst those we serve, is done by men and women who have lived experience and are now using their own recovery and experience to help others. I believe that the Lighthouse is still the only organization providing peer support services for 1915i. We are doing so, though the reimbursement rates are not adequate to cover the cost of providing these services. In order to continue, we will need assistance. In order for other providers to get involved, changes will need to occur. 1915i, like Free Through Recovery and Community Connect, is built upon the need for high quality peer support services.

I would like you to meet one such peer support specialist. Can I introduce Claire Bullis from our Lighthouse staff.

Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Service Department,

My name is Kerry (Karolyn) Leno. I provide Care Coordination at Lighthouse Church of Fargo for Free Through Recovery, Community Connect, and I am the Lead 1915i Care Coordinator. I want to give a written testimony in favor of Senate Bill 2166.

I have been in this line of work for roughly eight years. I worked in the Peer Support Specialist role for many years and then transitioned into Care Coordination. I am in sustained recovery from addiction and various mental health disorders myself. Working in this field has allowed me to help those struggling and enriched my recovery journey.

When I first came into recovery, there were no programs such as Free Through Recovery, Community Connect, and now Medicaid billable 1915i. These programs have changed how people view addiction and mental health, opened doors for people who in the past would not have these vital supports, and created communities that focus on solutions rather than turning away from those that struggle, which is why assuring that these programs, especially 1915i, due to the complexity, has a solid foundation for organizations like Lighthouse Church, which had never billed for services before under Medicaid or worked in a program as complex as this. In addition, these funds can help smaller organizations obtain the needed training, administrative support, and quality assurance, which does take time and funding to employ those skilled people and open up many more opportunities to expand the 1915i services for the people we serve.

Another essential piece to why I am in favor of Senate Bill 2166 is that in the state of North Dakota, we have many enrolled providers to provide 1915i, however, those that are actually providing the services are very limited, which creates many barriers to providing care coordination to participants that are receiving services under 1915i. We are only as good as our resources, and our resources are limited. More specifically, Peer Support Services is very limited under 1915i. Having another means of support, financial support, could aid Lighthouse Church in expanding our services, especially Peer Support, throughout our community. Peer support is the key piece in all three state programs. It will also allow other organizations to expand their 1915i services, which is sorely needed. All but one of my participants have asked for a Peer Support Specialist under 1915i. Currently, we do not have a Peer Support Specialist at other organizations to refer to that can go into the community and provide the services that Peer Support does. This funding will change that. Moving forward with Senate Bill 2166 will give the push needed to open more doors for the people we serve.

Thank you for taking the time to review my written testimony in favor of Senate Bill 2166.

This concludes my testimony.

Claire Bullis

District 21-02

Senate Bill NO. 2166

Good morning, my name is Claire Bullis and I am a peer support specialist at Lighthouse Church in Fargo.

It may not be evident to the outward eye, but I have struggled with mental health conditions that did not materialize overnight since I was a teenager. Many of us who battle with mental illness, have endured years of silent suffering, and countless treatment plans that were deemed “unsuccessful” or “with little resolve” and know what it is like to be void of any hope that life may improve. We know how easy it is to be tempted by the illusion of a safety net when desperation or exhaustion sets in. For some, that safety net is substance abuse. For others, it is not leaving home for days or weeks at a time because the world can be a frightening place. For me, it was starving or cutting myself until the thoughts that had taken up permanent residence in my head became a little quieter.

For years I had doctors and treatment providers placing me into the box of what they thought recovery looked like - but that I did not fit into it. As a result of this, at 21 years old I was put onto a quality-of-life care plan. At times I often felt like more of a problem than a person. I had professional healthcare support but had no real support from others who completely understood what I was going through.

I truly believe the 1915i program and peer support recovery services have the potential to help fill the gap in the behavioral healthcare system. Over the past year, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact it has had on the lives of its participants. As stated earlier, mental health conditions affect people of all ages and upbringings. We have found there to be a wide spectrum of functioning and severity in the participants we serve. By matching a peer support specialist with similar demographics or life experiences as the participant, we have seen the benefits that follow as a result of the connections built. Observing someone slowly unravel the unfounded beliefs that have been ingrained into their psyche by a society that is often quick to judge has been nothing short of incredible. Knowing you aren't alone and having someone to walk the path of recovery next to you can be transformative.

Over the past year, I've seen tremendous growth, healing, and self-discovery in the lives of many of the individuals we work with on 1915i. By establishing goals that are individualized with the participant's needs, input, and values as the focus, we can gather a better understanding of what recovery looks like to them and where support is needed most. For some that may mean showering regularly and taking their medication as prescribed. For others, it may mean getting back into the community or workforce after spending years cycling through institutional care settings. For people who struggle with their mental health, achieving those goals is monumental and requires a great amount of perseverance. Being able to walk alongside others who share the same life challenges has been a mutually beneficial journey.

I am reminded daily that even though setbacks occur, and bad days arise, hope still exists and there's no such thing as too far gone.

With additional funding for the behavioral health programs we work with such as 1915i, I believe the opportunities for expansion, additional training and education, and diversification will benefit our communities in both the immediate time and long-term future. We that the success we have seen so far can be continued and furthered with your support.

FEBRUARY 8, 2023

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

SB 2166

INTRODUCED BY

SEN DAVID CLEMENS

DIST 16

I AM SENATOR DAVID CLEMENS FROM DISTRICT 16. I AM HERE TO INTRODUCE SB 2166 WHICH IS REQUESTING FUNDS FOR THE LIGHTHOUSE RECOVERY ORGANIZATION OF FARGO.

The bill is requesting funds from the American Rescue Plan to financially support this organization in a community and time that has seen a dramatic increase in mental health and substance use crises.

The Lighthouse is working to meet the needs in our state related to long term support of people suffering from substance use disorder and various mental health disorders, services for state programs Free Through Recovery and Community Connect, Peer Support Services for people struggling with various behavioral health issues, community based support and networking with the F/M homeless population, and is striving to provide a variety of services to meet the growing population serviced by the ND Medicaid Billable 1915i program.

I hereby ask the state appropriations committee to fully support the request of \$3,00,000 in support of the Lighthouse Recovery Organization.

Respectfully submitted,

Sen David Clemens

Lighthouse Church is a recovery-based ministry in downtown Fargo that strives to provide a place of love, encouragement, hope and recovery for anyone seeking help. Recovery is defined broadly at Lighthouse. People recover from many things in life. Lighthouse has a basic spiritual philosophy that every individual is created by God and should be valued. At Lighthouse, people can come as they are and be welcomed, accepted, find support.

As a Recovery Community Organization (RCO), the Lighthouse houses a variety of anonymous groups (NA, AA, Al Anon, SA, RA), as well support groups for various mental health issues (depression, anxiety, abuse). There are faith-based programs, such as Celebrate Recovery, and various other faith-based programs. Lighthouse also has a children's and youth ministry and sees this as an area of need for future growth. The general population of Lighthouse Church, and the Lighthouse RCO is under-resourced.

Over my years of serving in leadership at the Lighthouse I have seen and learned much. Daily I encounter the challenges of Substance Use Disorder and mental health issues. I have seen the barriers that people face when they want to improve their life. I have seen the pain and cost of isolation and loneliness. I have seen the reality that there is no easy or quick fix. Recovery and life change is a long-term journey and investment. I often remind our staff that we are in a marathon with people, not a sprint. I have seen the universal need for love and acceptance and hope. In order to begin the recovery process, people need to establish a foundation of support, accountability, and help. Lighthouse has and is providing these things and more for countless individuals. But I have also seen miracles on a weekly basis. I witness life change and growth every week. **(An example)**

Lighthouse has been a provider for the North Dakota programs Free Through Recovery and Community Connect since their beginning. We have been honored to partner with the state to provide services to hundreds of men and women in these programs over the years. We have strived for excellence in both care coordination and peer support service and have developed a great reputation, not only in our own

community, but across the state. We have also sought to bring our service into the North Dakota Correctional Facilities and hope to renew these efforts after a long freeze on them due to Covid. That said, our services are currently brought into three correctional facilities in ND, and we hope to expand that in the near future.

When we learned about the program 1915i, and the same services we had been providing becoming Medicaid billable, we decided to get involved. Our goal has never been to make money, but to help people. The higher levels of service provider for in 1915i is something sorely needed. We see it every day. We made the investment to enroll, register staff to be able to provide service, learned and adapted to the administrative requirements and challenges, and were amongst the first to get started. As of today (Dec 15, 2022) we are still the only provider billing for peer support services in the state. We believe the program hinges on peer support. We see peer support as the crucial link to the over-all life-change and growth for the people we serve. A number of things occurred though. The referrals did not flood in and we were staffed, ready for them to do so. We also learned that many of the services are dramatically under-reimbursed, especially peer support services. For a year we have sought to navigate these challenges, educate the state on what we were seeing and learning, and do our best to serve the people we worked with. Frankly, the state has learned much from our efforts, and it was done on our dime. Our financial investment and shortfall was quite substantial.

We are seeking funding to help us recoup a bit of that loss and to move forward in services, serving all of the current programs, but particularly 1915i. We are also seeking to administratively organize in such a way so as to better link our state services along with the Lighthouse RCO and developing services for those in need. We would like to expand our peer support services to be able to serve the needs of people who are not eligible for reimbursed services, or who are simply unable to make the step towards such services at this time. We see a growing need for mental health support in our community and are aware that therapists and medical professionals refer people to us for basic support and assistance. We would like to increase our efforts in the correctional facilities of North Dakota and bring the same kind of encouragement and hope people find at Lighthouse to those incarcerated.

Another personal example