

Testimony
Human Services Committee – Department of Human Services
Representative Alon Wieland, Chairman
August 2, 2011

Chairman Wieland and members of the Interim Human Services Committee, I am Carol K. Olson, Executive Director of the Department of Human Services. I appear before you to provide information on the committee's study of causes of the increases in the Department of Human Services' caseloads and program utilization.

The Department of Human Services administers several economic assistance programs intended to serve vulnerable individuals and those unable to access services by other means. The economic assistance programs administered by the Department include:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Child Care Assistance (CCA)
- Medicaid
- Children's Health Insurance (CHIP)

Currently, the caseloads are fairly stable for the TANF and Child Care Assistance Programs. The SNAP caseload has grown over the past year; however, the caseload growth rate in North Dakota is lower than other states.

The Medicaid and CHIP caseloads have both grown over the past year; however, the growth in Medicaid for the past 12 months (July 2010- June 2011) is lower than the growth for the previous 12 months (July 2009 – June 2010). CHIP enrollment increased in both 12 month periods which corresponds to the outreach funding and efforts as well as the CHIP

eligibility level being raised from 140% to 150% (net) in October 2008 and from 150% to 160% (net) in July 2009.

The Department produces a Quarterly Budget Insight report that includes caseload and expenditure data for selected programs within the Department of Human Services at a point in time. The reports are sent electronically to all legislators each quarter, and I have attached the most recent report for your review. The reports are available on the Department's web site at:

<http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/about.html>.

One of the roles of the Department is to *provide services that help vulnerable North Dakotans of all ages maintain or enhance their quality of life, which may be threatened by emotional crisis, disabling conditions, a lack of financial resources or an inability to protect themselves*. The economic assistance programs noted earlier are essential in meeting that purpose. The Department looks forward to providing information for and participating in this committee's study of causes of the increases in the Department of Human Services' caseloads and program utilization.

I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.