

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4029

Senate Appropriations Committee

Senator Holmberg, Chairman

February 22, 2007

Chairman Holmberg, members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am Alex C. Schweitzer, Superintendent of the North Dakota State Hospital and Developmental Center of the Department of Human Services. I appear before you today in support of the amendment to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4029 as presented by Senator Nething.

The Department of Human Services has no issue with a review of the appropriate use of facilities for the treatment of mentally ill individuals. The Department also supports the concept of community based services and treatment as close to home as possible for people with mental illness. The Department's eight (8) regional Human Service Centers currently provide effective community based services for the mentally ill.

The resolution as written seems only to address the care of mentally ill individuals in the community and does not specifically address the location and provision of public inpatient psychiatric services. The amendment offered by Senator Nething clarifies the need for the study to address this concern.

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It is clear when speaking with the Directors of Human Service Centers, that they feel strongly that the system needs a public inpatient facility. Also, as you are aware, the State Hospital serves as the only inpatient option for the Jamestown and Devils Lake region.

The State Hospital in 2006 served a traditional average daily population of 215 patients, which is only 13 patients, less than the average daily population served in 1997.

The history of private psychiatric facilities in the State of North Dakota has been to serve the patient for their acute stage of illness and then transfer them to the State Hospital for long-term treatment and maintenance. As such, a State Hospital is a necessary part of the continuum of care for the mentally ill. The size of the hospital and the scope of services provided in a public inpatient hospital can be determined by the study proposed in Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4029.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.