Testimony
House Bill 1476 – Aging and Disability Resource Center
House Human Services Committee
Representative Weisz, Chairman
January 26, 2009

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Linda Wright, Director of the Aging Services Division, Department of Human Services. I am testifying in favor of House Bill 1476.

The need for easier access for consumers to information, service eligibility and service options has been documented in many studies that have been conducted in our state. Please refer to Attachment A, which was published in 1987 as a result of the "Drayton Study", recommending that a single point of entry be established. Twenty-two years later, this is still a need in North Dakota. The current terminology for single point of entry or no wrong door is an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC). Aging and Disability Resource Centers have been established in 45 states. A description of ADRCs and a map of current states that have established ADRCs is in Attachment B.

The Governor and the Department of Human Services consider the establishment of an ADRC as a priority, and therefore, have included $600,000 in the Aging Services Division budget for the 2009-2011 biennium.

House Bill 1476 amends N.D.C.C. 50-06-29 which currently restricts the Department to using federal funds to establish an ADRC. The Department did submit one unsolicited grant application to the Administration on Aging and one application to the Centers for Medicare

and Medicaid Services. Due to lack of funding and competition from urban states, the applications were not successful.

The functions or components of an ADRC are outlined in Attachments C and D. The purpose of an ADRC is not to create another layer of bureaucracy, but instead to coordinate existing services and providers to eliminate duplication and create greater efficiency and effectiveness, and to provide consumers easier access to services.

Several current federal initiatives require coordination with ADRCs. One example is the Money Follows the Person grant which the Department is currently implementing in North Dakota. Another example is a recent grant announcement that would provide additional funding to State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs). If the Insurance Commissioner's office applies for this grant, it requires coordination with an ADRC, however, it does not provide funding for an ADRC.

Attachments E and F are examples of how an ADRC, or single point of entry, works. In contrast, consumers in the state of North Dakota face a confusing system of multiple entry points to information, services and eligibility sometimes resulting in more restrictive, and more expensive care. As an example, Mr. Jones has been hospitalized due to a stroke and the physician tells Mrs. Jones that her husband will be released in two days and could go home if he had supportive services in place. Otherwise, Mr. Jones will need to enter institutional care. Mrs. Jones doesn't know where to begin. After visiting with the hospital discharge planner, Mrs. Jones contacts six different agencies and completes six different application forms to arrange for services for her husband, which has been a frustrating and exhausting process. If an ADRC were

established, Mrs. Jones could make one contact with the ADRC which would provide her with information, eligibility determination for several different services and assistance arranging for all of the services needed by Mr. Jones.

Attachment G outlines the successes of the first ADRCs established in 2003 and 2004. Attachment H contains information about the fiscal impact of ADRCs on long term care costs. At this time, it appears that established ADRCs have slowed the rate of growth of the costs of institutional care. This has been accomplished through assisting consumers to remain at home and in their own communities through the provision of home and community based services.

In summary, we recommend approval of House Bill 1476, the funding for which is already in the Department of Human Services budget.

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