

**Testimony**  
**Human Services Committee**  
**Representative Kathy Hogan, Chair**  
**July 25, 2016**

Chairman Hogan, and members of the Human Services Committee, I am Nancy Nikolas Maier, Director of the Aging Services Division, for the Department of Human Services (Department). I am here today to provide suggestions on the prioritizing of recommendations from the final report of the North Dakota Family Caregiver Supports and Services Study.

After reviewing the recommendations included in the study the Department offers the following suggestions to maximize the use of existing resources for family caregivers while furthering the following goals identified in the study: assisting family caregivers in finding and connecting to current resources, increasing access to respite care across the state, and helping to build workforce capacity to serve caregivers; especially those in rural areas.

- Promote awareness of the Family Caregiver Support Program and other services that provide respite options for family caregivers to ensure it is fully utilized across the state.
- Identify marketing and communication strategies to promote awareness and benefits of the Aging & Disability Resource LINK and statewide options counseling system.
- Investigate the feasibility of applying for a federal grant from the Lifespan Respite Care Program.

- Support the statewide direct care workforce initiative in an effort to increase the number of individuals interested in caregiving professions, particularly in rural areas.
- Expand available respite care by training college students (i.e. nursing, social work students) and volunteers to give family caregivers a break.

The Department provided testimony at a previous interim committee meeting about the family caregiver services and supports that are available to eligible recipients under various programs including respite care and options counseling. Although these services are promoted by state and regional staff in various ways, i.e. brochures, group presentations, and the Department's website, no formal marketing plan is currently in place. Improving awareness of available options will help maximize the use of current resources and help caregivers connect with the support they need.

The study also identified a need for additional respite options for individuals who may not otherwise qualify for available services because they do not meet eligibility criteria. The U.S. Administration for Community Living provides competitive grants to state agencies to make respite available and accessible to family caregivers regardless of age or disability. Grant funds can be used to expand/enhance Lifespan respite systems in the State including emergency respite services, training and recruiting respite workers and volunteers, and assisting caregivers in gaining access to needed services. The Department could explore the possibility of applying for this grant to

establish additional respite options for individuals who may not otherwise qualify for existing services and enhance respite options in rural areas.

In order to support the needs of family caregivers there must be an adequate number of qualified and reliable providers and volunteers who are willing to assist. Through the Money Follows the Person Demonstration grant direct care workforce initiative, materials have already been developed to inform college students (i.e. nursing, social work students) about caregiving professions. The Department's workforce development coordinator will continue to collaborate with public and private agencies, associations, and individuals to implement this strategy to encourage students and volunteers to provide services to family caregivers.

This concludes my testimony on the Department's family caregiver supports and services. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.