

Budget Committee on Human Services

Senator Dick Dever, Chairman

July 28, 2005

Mr. Chairman and members of the Budget Committee on Human Services, for the record my name is Alex C. Schweitzer, Superintendent of the North Dakota State Hospital and North Dakota Developmental Center. I am here to testify on behalf of the Department of Human Services regarding Section 16 – HB 1012, the plan to transfer appropriate Developmental Center residents to communities.

A discussion of the recent history of the population at the Developmental Center may be helpful for the Committee.

The Developmental Center from 1997 to 2003 showed a slight increase in average daily population, from 141 individuals to 147 individuals. Although the facility discharged several individuals during this time period, it was not enough to offset the increase of overall admissions to the facility. The Center was seeing increased admissions because of the admission of individuals with severe behavioral issues, first time admissions, short time contingent admissions and transfers from the North Dakota State Hospital. The Developmental Center and the Department of Human Services Disability Services Division administration in 2003 appointed a task force of employees from these two divisions to develop a plan to assure that individuals from the Developmental Center be placed in appropriate community settings. By July of 2005, the Developmental Center's population was again at 141 individuals.

The Department of Human Services has a two-fold approach to complying with the mandate of Section 16 – HB 1012.

The internal task force will continue to operate with the goal of placing individuals from the Developmental Center in appropriate community settings.

The Department of Human Services will convene an external task force of interested stakeholders to provide input and feedback to further develop the plan for placement of Developmental Center individuals into appropriate community settings. Interested stakeholders may include private advocacy groups, private service providers, families, individuals with developmental disabilities, and staff from the Department of Human Services Disability Services Division, Human Service Centers and the Developmental Center.

The 2005 legislature appropriated \$50,000 for the work in transitioning individuals from the Developmental Center to community settings. To fully accomplish the goal of transitioning individuals to the community, fiscal resources will need to follow the individuals from the Developmental Center to the community. This can only be accomplish if the Center is able to close enough living areas, so that the money can be transferred for community based services. The above-mentioned task forces must not only plan for discharge of individuals, but also assure that once in the community, that these individuals remain in the community. Once living areas are closed the Developmental Center will not have the fiscal or staff resources, for an influx of readmissions, as money will have followed the client for payment of community based services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Section 16– HB 1012. I would be willing to respond to any questions.