

2023 SENATE HUMAN SERVICES

SB 2268

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee
Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

SB 2268
1/24/2023

Relating to an appropriation to the department of health and human services for a pilot program for support services for youth at risk.

11:32 AM **Madam Chair Lee** called the hearing to order. **Senators Lee, Cleary, Clemens, K. Roers, Weston, Hogan** were present.

Discussion Topics:

- Life saving
- Food and shelter
- Youth at risk

11:33 AM **Senator Kyle Davison District 41**, introduced SB 2268, testified in favor verbally.

11:41 AM **Bruce Murry, representing Fraser LTD Fargo, ND**, testified in favor. #15650

11:43 AM **Sandra Leyland, Chief Executive Officer, Fraser LTD Fargo, ND** testified in favor. #16309

11:54 AM **Amanda Lindstrom, Independent Clinical Social Worker, Clinical Administrator Valley Hope Counseling Fraser LTD** testimony online in favor. #15646

12:00 PM **Sandra Leyland**, provided additional information, testified in favor verbally.

12:01 PM **Erica Markle, Transitional Youth Services Program Administrator, Steppingstones Resource Center**, provided testimony online in favor and read testimony from youth, using initials for confidentiality. #15676

12:09 PM **Denise Harvey, Protection Advocacy**, testimony in favor verbally.

12:11 PM **Desiree Sorenson, Director Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zones** testified in favor verbally. #15829

Additional Written Testimony:

Brenda Bergsrud, Ex Director Amachi Lake Region Community Shelter #15661

Josh Sayler, Director of Busines Development, Prairie St John #15663

Jim Keal, M.Ed., M.S. Assistant Principal, Dakota High School #16244

Agassiz Building, Summer School, and Fargo Counseling Program #16244

Jennifer Frueh, Coordinator Adult Learning Center #16246

David Burkhorn, Principal Dakota High School #16243

12:13 PM **Madam Chair Lee** closed the hearing.
Patricia Lahr, Committee Clerk

2023 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Human Services Committee
Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

SB 2268
1/30/2023

Relating to an appropriation to the department of health and human services for a pilot program for support services for youth at risk.

2:40 PM **Madam Chair Lee** called the meeting to order. **Senators Lee, Cleary, Clemens, K. Roers, Weston, Hogan** are present.

Discussion Topics:

- High risks
- Regulations
- Qualifications
- Standards

Senator K. Roers makes motion **DO NOT PASS**.

Senator Hogan seconded.

Roll call vote.

Senators	Vote
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Sean Cleary	Y
Senator David A. Clemens	Y
Senator Kathy Hogan	Y
Senator Kristin Roers	Y
Senator Kent Weston	Y

Motion Passes 6-0-0

Senator K. Roers carries SB 2268

2:50 PM **Madam Chair Lee** closed the meeting.

Patricia Lahr, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE

SB 2268: Human Services Committee (Sen. Lee, Chairman) recommends **DO NOT PASS** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2268 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

TESTIMONY

SB 2268

Testimony

Senate Bill No. 2268

Human Services Committee

Chairman Lee

January 24, 2023

Good morning Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, thank you for allowing me to appear before you today. My name is Amanda Lindstrom. I am a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker in the states of Minnesota and North Dakota. I have worked in the social work/human services field in various capacities including developmental disabilities, child protection and mental health for over 18 years. I have been employed by Fraser, Ltd. nearly 7 years working as an outpatient mental health therapist and the Clinical Administrator of Valley Hope Counseling Services which is a program within Fraser, Ltd.

Valley Hope Counseling Services currently employs four therapists that provide outpatient mental health services through in person or telehealth therapy throughout the community. Valley Hope additionally directly supports the Stepping Stones Resource Center providing mental health support to the youth in various capacities such as disability verifications, individual therapy, group therapy, and crisis support. Valley Hope provides mental health services to youth with or without insurance to limit any barriers for the youth in accessing needed services.

I have directly observed the importance of having a Resource Center for one of the most vulnerable populations in our communities. I have had the opportunity to get to know many of the youth within a safe therapeutic space. The youth that access services through the Stepping Stones Resource Center have experienced complex trauma with the vast majority experiencing significant childhood trauma.

They are individuals that from the start of their lives experienced unfathomable life circumstances such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and/or sexual abuse that no person should ever have to experience. They often then enter the child welfare/child protection systems in which they are placed into foster care or residential treatment settings. A large percentage of the youth we serve “aged out of the system” with no place to go once they turn 18. Their birth connections have been lost or are not safe and the systems that were put in place to protect them often let them go when they turn 18. The question we all need to ask ourselves, is where do we expect individuals that have experienced numerous traumas with no support system, no credit history, no home and no money to go?

They need a safe place to meet their basic needs and develop a support system to become independent in the community. I have directly observed youth come into the program off of the street with no place to go. With the right supports, many of these individuals have gone on to graduate from high school, go to college, become employed and obtain their own housing within the community. They wouldn't have been able to do this without the support of programs such as The Stepping Stones Resource Center. Because Valley Hope also provides mental health services for the whole community, I have been able to continue to work with several of the youth even after they left transitional youth programming. They are working, paying rent, and contributing in various capacities to better our communities.

I ask you to please support Senate Bill No 2268, not only for the youth we serve but to show as a community and state that we acknowledge that all people deserve shelter, support and treatment especially individuals that had a harder start in life. This concludes my testimony. I sincerely thank you for your time and consideration.

Amanda Lindstrom, LCSW (ND), LICSW (MN)

Fraser, Ltd.

SB 2268 (2023 LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY)
SENATE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
HONORABLE JUDY LEE CHAIRMAN
JANUARY 24, 2023 10:45 A.M.
TESTIMONY OF BRUCE MURRY FOR FRASER LTD

Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Bruce Murry, Lobbyist #330, representing Fraser LTD of Fargo, North Dakota.

Senate Bill 2268 seeks to preserve life-saving services to youth at risk. Services happen from a center in the Fargo area, but serve youth from around the state. As you will hear, this program was privately developed and private capital is being raised for the physical infrastructure. However, the number of youth at risk who need services has grown. Both before and after the pandemic, the severity of needs of youth continued to grow. The need of youth at risk in North Dakota, especially in Fargo, exceeds the operational fundraising capacity of a mid-sized nonprofit that has responsibilities to other vulnerable populations.

I would like to introduce the following persons to offer more detailed testimony and to answer your initial questions. I will get you back in touch with these experts if you have questions in the future.

Sandra Leyland, Chief Executive Officer of Fraser LTD;
Amanda Lindstrom, Independent Clinical Social Worker, Clinical Administrator, Valley Hope Counseling Center, Fraser LTD;
Erica Markle, Licensed Baccalaureate Social Worker, Administrator, Fraser LTD;
Various letters from Fraser's Board of Directors and community supporters; and
Youth with lived experience in the program — to be determined.

I now welcome Sandra Leyland to give an overview of the bill and Fraser's youth services. She will introduce her colleagues.

....

As I've worked with Fraser to bring this proposal before you, some of the challenges facing these youth remind me of the travails of my own young adult children. However, we have relatively healthy extended families, graduate degrees, some savings, and have been blessed to avoid some of the most tragic and traumatic experiences. I am gratified this program exists to offer another chance to these young adults who probably lacked such informal supports. After all, North Dakota can ill afford to lose the help of one worker, or the beauty of any young citizen's life.

Testimony

SB 2268

Dear Chair Lee and members of the Human Services Committee,

I am Brenda Bergsrud, Executive Director of Amachi Mentoring and Lake Region Community Shelter in Devils Lake. I want to stress the importance of providing shelter to those in need and the lack of shelter for juveniles.

I want to share ONE story of many situations we have had at the shelter in Devils Lake. A young man, age 17 presented himself and asked to stay. We are not able to house anyone under the age of 18. This child is attending high school, working at a fast-food restaurant, and wanted to stay in Devils Lake for these two reasons. He currently is under the care of his grandparents. I phoned the police and he begged for them to take him to jail so he would have a place to stay. He told us repeatedly that he could not stay with his grandparents as they "use", his mother also uses and his father is nowhere to be found. He repeated that he just wants to do good. Our hearts were broken, mine and the police officers who took him to CPS.

This is a scenario that the shelter staff encounters weekly. WE NEED HELP for these young people wanting to break the vicious cycle they are living in. Keep in mind that a suppressant for hunger is meth. Meth is being forced at these children at a young age. Parents are no longer caring for their children, causing homelessness and hunger.

The Lake Region Shelter is the only shelter in Benson, Nelson, Ramsey, Eddy, Towner and Cavalier counties.

Thank you for your consideration to support SB 2268 and the youth in need in North Dakota.

Brenda Bergsrud



January 23rd, 2023

Relating to providing an appropriation to the Department of Health and Human Services for a pilot program for support services for youth at risk.

Dear Chairman Lee and Members of the Senate Human Services Committee:

On behalf of Prairie St. John's, I would like to thank you for your continued support and commitment to serving the youth of our state with supportive services. My name is Josh Sayler and I have been working in behavioral health for over 16 years, the last 5 ½ years with Prairie St. John's, a crisis behavioral health hospital. I humbly ask for your support of SB 2268. Fraser, Ltd. has offered supportive services to at-risk youth through their Stepping Stones Resource Center for 14 years. As someone who has interacted with Stepping Stones Resource Center staff and the services they provide over the past decade, I can attest to the quality of services offered and the immense current need for these services.

At Prairie St. John's we have seen the need for behavioral health services continue to trend up at an alarming rate over the last several years. In 2020 Prairie St. John's took 2,730 calls for inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services for children and adolescents. In 2021, we took 3,700 calls seeking services for this same population. There is tremendous value in putting resources towards prevention and treatment for such a vulnerable population. A population that needs the services and advocacy that Fraser, Ltd. and the Stepping Stones Resource Center has been providing.

It is critical that Fraser, Ltd. receive operational funding support to continue this crucial work. As such Prairie St. John's is in support of SB 2268 to provide this funding.

Thank you again for your commitment to the behavioral health needs of our residents. Please feel free to contact me at my information below if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Josh Sayler
Director of Business Development
Prairie St. John's
701-478-7501
josh.sayler@uhsinc.com

Testimony

Senate Bill #2268

Chairman Lee

Human Services Committee

January 24th, 2023

Chairman Lee and members of the Human Services Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 2268. I am Erica Markle, I am the Transitional Youth Services Program Administrator at Fraser Ltd. in Fargo. I provide program oversight for Stepping Stones Resource Center: our drop in center for youth ages 16-26 years of age and their children. We have had the privilege of serving the community through Stepping Stones Resource Center for 14 years. Each year we have been able to grow our outreach and increase the level of support we provide to the community. Our first year of operation we served 338 unique individuals, this past year we served 898 unique individuals; a 166% increase in clients served. We are at the point now where we have outgrown our current space and are in the process of building a new center in order to accommodate the expansion of our programing and increased level of clients served.

Stepping Stones Resource Center is structured programmatically using the Transition to Independence Process. This evidence-based model focuses on a strength-based, person-centered approach to assist youth who have emotional and behavioral difficulties. We focus on assisting the youth we serve on their journey to independence through groups, modeling behaviors, and wrap around case management. Areas of program focus are centered on gaining meaningful employment, continuing education endeavors, finding and securing stable housing, connecting with mental and physical health service providers, and becoming an active member in the community.

Throughout the years, we have seen our target population presenting to us with an increase in severity of mental health and substance use disorders. During the COVID pandemic, this was accelerated. Many individuals in our community found themselves isolated from the community and resources they used to turn to. This only highlighted the importance of our drop in center. When it felt like everywhere in the community was shutting down, we and other human service agencies stayed open. We provided what many of our clients identified as "life saving measures". We gave them food when they had nothing to eat, we gave them shelter when they had nowhere else to go. We have seen a community need for food baskets like never before. We have increased the amount of food given to individuals and families by over 60 percent these past three years. We are seeing the lasting effects of COVID and the high inflation rate on groceries impacting our neighbors and are grateful to be able to help. We have seen an increase of 35 percent in the amount of food we are getting from Great Plains Food Bank for community distribution.

Furthermore, we assisted in preventing dozens of suicides from youth who felt hopeless. I can testify to this as the youth have disclosed this information to us after the fact. One individual who will provide testimony on how Stepping Stones Resource Center assisted them informed me that "if it wasn't for this place I wouldn't be here and would have ended it a long time ago. Thank you for never giving up on

me". 79 percent of the youth we serve at Stepping Stones Resource Center have a mental health diagnosis, 62 percent of the youth have a chemical dependency diagnosis, and 30 percent of the youth we serve are survivors of human trafficking. Having a community space for these individuals to be safe, to get their needs met, and to learn skills is vital to the community.

We see the individuals we serve as more than just a number. We know them by name, know their story, and know their dreams. It is due to this connection that we are successful in assisting them in their goals surrounding independence and becoming an integrated member of society. Currently, 54 percent of our youth we serve are employed, close to 10 percent of our youth are enrolled in college, getting their GED, or are attending High School. We are striving to only increase these numbers and our community supports.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in front of you chairman Lee and members of the Human Services Committee.

Testimony

Senate Bill #2268

Chairman Lee

Human Services Committee

January 24th, 2023

I am AB, I am a single mom to three children, and infant, a 2 year old, and a three year old. SSRC took me and my children into their shelter when I had nowhere else to stay. They helped me get into my own apartment. They help my children and I face challenges that we would have faced alone. When I was recovering from my C-Section, the staff were very helpful in terms of my physically being unable to do certain things. They also provide assistance even now, often going out of their way. My children have built excellent relationships with the Fraser staff. They help me with hygiene products, food, and baby supplies. I am very grateful this program exists.

I am MK, I am a mother staying in the shelter. Stepping Stones has been extremely helpful with providing a living area for my family of 5. They've provided us with not only diapers and clothing but with lunch every day as well. They workers here are very good at communicating and working with us. They are also very caring and more than willing to help when asked. Overall, I do feel safe here. My kids have a warm bed and shower. We wouldn't have any of this without Stepping Stones.

I am CR, Stepping Stones Resource Center gave me a place to stay, food to eat, and provided for all my basic needs when I had nowhere else to go. They helped me with my mental health and supported me when I was suicidal. I wouldn't be here today without their support.

I am CB, Stepping Stones Resource Center helps me with my mental stability. They help me remember to take my medications and assist me with getting to and from my appointments. They give me a place to sleep, food, somewhere to be warm during the day. They are helping me find employment. The staff are like my family. They care about me and everyone here and want the best for us.

I am DB, Stepping Stones Resource Center helped me after trafficking. They gave me a safe place to be. They are helping me get back on track to being on my own feet. They are helping me plan for my future. I am now searching for employment, getting all my vital documents again, and helping me search for apartments.

Testimony prepared for the
Senate Human Services Committee
January 24, 2023

By: Desiree Sorenson, Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone Director

RE: SB2268 Provide an Appropriation to the Department of Health and Human Services for a Pilot program for support services for youth at risk

Chairman, and Members of the Committee. My name is Desiree Sorenson, I am the Director of the Mountrail McKenzie Human Service Zone. I am here today to provide support for money appropriated, that would go towards supportive services for youth at risk. However, I have concerns for the limited details within this bill regarding timeframe and regulations for implementation, in order for this to be successful for all.

More information would be needed from other stakeholders that provide services to youth at risk, in order to ensure successful implementation and use of funds. The information in this bill is very much needed to make the best decision for each youth involved and their individual needs.

Often there are children in crisis and in need of further assessment to identify the most appropriate service delivery to meet the needs of the child. It is critical that during that period of assessment children have access to safety and shelter, to establish a baseline for further needs.

This completes my testimony. I am available for any questions.



DAKOTA HIGH SCHOOL
Agassiz Building
1305 9th Avenue South
Fargo, ND 58103
701.446.2800 • FAX: 701.446.2899
www.fargo.k12.nd.us/dakota

David Burkman, *Principal & Director of K-12 English Learners* • 701.446.2850
James Keal, *Assistant Principal* • 701.446.3015
Ila Hegg, *Administrative Assistant* • 701.446.2805
Arati Heath, *K-12 EL Administrative Assistant* • 701.446.3151

1/23/2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the Principal at Dakota High School (Fargo Public Schools' Alternative HS). I am writing this letter in support of SB 2268 – A pilot program for support services for youth at risk.

At Dakota High School, we continue to serve a population of great students (people/citizens) who are working towards a high school diploma that leads to a future with many options and opportunities for our skilled, choice-ready graduates. Barriers. We are seeing an increase in students who are experiencing homelessness, mental health struggles, substance abuse and lacking strong, traditional family support networks. Many students have sizable barriers to overcome. They need help.

We have a passion for helping our alternative education students on their journey and look forward to learning how the state supports and partners with organizations working with at-risk youth.

Thank You,

David Burkman, Dakota HS Principal



DAKOTA HIGH SCHOOL
Agassiz Building
1305 9th Avenue South
Fargo, ND 58103
701.446.2800 • FAX: 701.446.2899
www.fargo.k12.nd.us/dakota

David Burkman, *Principal & Director of K-12 English Learners* • 701.446.2850
James Keal, *Assistant Principal* • 701.446.3015
Ila Hegg, *Administrative Assistant* • 701.446.2805
Arati Heath, *K-12 EL Administrative Assistant* • 701.446.3151

1/23/2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I'm writing this letter in support of SB 2268 – A pilot program for support services for youth at risk. I am the Assistant Principal at Dakota High School in Fargo; which serves as the alternative high school for Fargo area youth. I see a tremendous need for teen/young adult supports and it continues to grow.

We serve a high number of homeless students, many of whom are unaccompanied minors or young adults on their own. The services this pilot program provides would help support our students on the path to graduation and becoming productive citizens and taxpayers.

I look forward to analyzing the data from this pilot to better understand community needs and what resources have the greatest impact on our young adult population.

Thank You,

Jim

Jim Keal, M.Ed., M.S.
he/him/his
Assistant Principal, Dakota High School
Agassiz Building, Summer School, and Fargo Counseling Program
701-446-3015

**ADULT LEARNING CENTER**

Agassiz Building
1305 9th Avenue South
Fargo, ND 58103
701.446.2807 • FAX: 701.446.2899
www.fargo.k12.nd.us/alcenter

Mrs. Jennifer Frueh, *Coordinator*
Mrs. Marlene Schmidt, *Secretary*

1/23/2023

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in support of SB 2268 – A Pilot Program for Support Services for Youth at Risk. I am the Administrator for the Adult Learning Center which is located in Fargo, ND but also serves as a Regional Adult Education hub that provides services to our satellite location at Wahpeton Adult Learning Center on the NDSCS campus in Wahpeton, ND.

In both locations, our team works to support students on their pathway, not only to obtain their GED but also support them to choice ready upon graduation as they enter employment, post secondary education/training or military careers. The GED programs at the Adult Learning Centers provide assistance and support to students 16 years and older. Currently, 23% of the student population in the Fargo Adult Learning Center is between the ages of 16-21 years old. Within this age group, our team notices an increased need to support students facing significant challenges such as homelessness, food insecurities, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, mental health struggles, lack of support and trouble navigating networks for support.

While the challenges this demographic group of students face, I believe that the work of this pilot could help us better understand the needs for these important, valuable young adults and how to best utilize our state resources and maximize the impact to bring positive change not only to their lives but for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Frueh".

Jennifer Frueh

Testimony

SB 2268

Chairman Lee

Good Morning Chairman Lee and members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Sandra Leyland, Chief Executive Officer for Fraser Ltd., in Fargo. We began as the Florence Crittenton Home for unwed mothers. Since our inception in 1893 we continue to meet the needs of children, youth, and adults. Services and resources have grown to include independent living supports, residential services, and day support services for people with disabilities; childcare services for children who are typically developing and children with special needs; and transitional youth services which provide case management for skill training, and basic needs resources for transition age youth (16 – 26) and their children. In 2012, after recognizing the fact we could not *find* timely outpatient mental health services to meet the needs of our youth in crisis, we opened Valley Hope Counseling Center for the surrounding community. By stepping out to help others in the community, we also helped our youth by providing readily accessible, professional therapists.

Stepping Stones Resource Center – (SSRC), a low barrier resource center serving youth without judgement and providing person centered planning.

In 2006, a grassroots effort began to take shape identifying a unique population of adolescents and young adults at risk of homelessness, incarceration, suicide and human trafficking. Prior to opening Stepping Stones Resource Center (SSRC) in 2009, a study conducted by the University of Mary in 2008 reviewed 14 different programs around the country addressing similar needs. (SEE ATTACHMENT A – Fraser’s Center for the Transition Age Youth) Recommendations from the study were based on techniques proven by industry leaders. Focus areas included job, home, mental and physical health care, fulfilling personal relationships and good education.

The following ten items were recommended to Fraser Ltd., by the study. We answered as follows:

1. Provide housing programs – in 2010 Fraser began transitional housing and in 2014 the permanent housing program also known as Butler House opened.
2. Hire Peer mentors – we did not use this approach, however, peer mentors do operate in North Dakota’s Free through Recovery Program.

3. Offer supported employment programs – we did not accomplish as described, but our case managers assist youth in finding community employment. Fifty-four percent of our youth are employed.
4. Collaboration with local law enforcement – this has been on-going since the inception of SSRC. We are thankful to have had and currently have, liaisons working with us from the Fargo Police Department. It makes a HUGE difference to our program.
5. Encourage LEGISLATIVE action – our first efforts began with a Senate resolution which eventually became HB 1014. Our thanks to Senators: Lee, Mathern, and the late Senator Tom Fischer.
6. Involve youth in planning – this is conducted on an informal basis at monthly meetings with staff. Current plans are being reviewed to add a youth to our board. This position would participate in agenda items impacting the SSRC and residential programs.
7. Seek funding from counties and local governments – Funding for the transitional age youth program which includes housing and the SSRC, is currently dependent on in-kind donations, grants, special events, and the generosity of donors, along with the never ending efforts of Fraser employees from *all* departments. Our success rate with private grants in the past five years is 23/46 or 50%. National averages indicate between 7.4 % and 30 % of private grants submitted are ever awarded. Applying for grants and relying on them makes budgeting very difficult from year to year. Competition is steep. There is never a guarantee on what dollar amount will be accepted. Our success rate for governmental grants in the past 5 years is 14/16 or 87.5 %. National averages of governmental grants received is 20%. HUD and the Department of Commerce information of the past 5 years indicated 74.8 % of the requested amount was granted. We are seeking state funding.
8. Hire a technical/psychological consultant – Fraser was fortunate to originally obtain behavioral and psychiatric support from Dr. Rachel Fleissner, a former Fargo psychiatrist and recipient of a BUSH Fellowship award. As mentioned above, we eventually opened Valley Hope. A key step has been training case managers and others in crisis management and trauma associated with mental health & addiction issues.
9. Implement constant quality monitoring – Fraser completes annual operational reports to evaluate our outcomes. (2019/2020 Annual Operational Transitional Youth Services data available upon request.) We also employ quality assurance staff and use best practices from other disciplines whenever possible to support a diversified target population. The

demographics of the target population includes *approximately* 20 % of youth self-reporting disabilities, Autism spectrum, poor mental health, suicidal thoughts, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and more. We know the percentage is much higher.

10. Utilize wrap around approach – Our program model serves youth in 7 transition domains of their lives; employment, career building educational opportunities, living situations, personal effectiveness & well-being, and community-life functioning. This is known as the Transition to Independence Process (TIP). This is an evidence-based approach (R. Loeth, personal communications, June 30. 2008)

In 2020, at the start of the pandemic, Fraser began a bricks and mortar capital campaign to build a new Stepping Stone Resource Center and remodel an existing building for additional permanent supportive housing. We needed physical space to allow for safety, privacy, and dignity of youth served while improving efficiency. This is being done on the current campus. The location is residential with a local alternative high school and community amenities including bus transportation nearby. It is a 6 million dollar project and we have completed over 50 % of the required funding, with 2.6 remaining. We are not asking for funding of the capital campaign. Personal donations have built this campus and we will continue to seek them, also grants or in-kind support. Donors are not as likely to fund *operational costs* so we are seeking financial assistance from the state. The \$2,000,000 request for a pilot in SB 2268 would not only assist Fraser Ltd., in continuing our service model (hopefully improving it as we go) and collecting data in support of the mental health needs of our youth, it would also make available much needed revenue for other providers across the state to continue their mission and hopefully gain momentum from a pilot project. An example of a state network partner with similar program goals would be the Lake Region Community Shelter in Devils Lake, Executive Director is Brenda Bergsrud.

Perhaps the most important outcome of the pilot would be to identify how youth services can operate as part of ongoing behavioral and other health programs of the State. Despite our best efforts, we have not been able to fully tap existing programs and funding sources even though our goals are very much in alignment. We hope to clearly identify how youth services can function within programs such as Free through Recovery, 1915 (i), Community Connect and others.

I would like to end my testimony with a story from the very early days of Stepping Stones Resource Center. As a mom and a grandma it's personal for me. This story, is an experience my mind flashes back

to almost every time I pick up a newborn and feel the weightlessness, the almost *nothingness* wrapped in a blanket. So tiny, innocent, trusting – at the mercy of the person holding them.

It had been subzero temperatures for days, not uncommon in the middle of a North Dakota winter. A three month old had been brought in to SSRC in a car seat wearing a nappy and a paper-thin receiving blanket. He needed a diaper change. The little boy's mother had to get to work. She was single, no family supports and had limited resources. She was trying to do the right thing, go to work and provide for her son. Her next steps were misguided...but fortunate for her son.

She passed off her son to friends at the bus transfer station. They were SSRC participants and came to our case management staff for direction. They called me. The program director placed the three month old little boy in my arms – there was NO WEIGHT – he felt like a newborn. There was NOTHING in his eyes but somehow those deep brown liquid pools still reached out and literally took hold of my heart and soul.

It was sometime later it came back to me – if He brings you to it, He will bring you through it. We are getting through it and appreciate this opportunity to appeal to you in the form of SB 2268.

Thank you again Senator Lee for allowing Fraser staff to appear by video this morning.

This concludes my testimony.

Executive Summary

Fraser LTD, a non-profit organization located in Fargo, ND, contacted the University of Mary in the summer of 2008 and requested the help of a student consultant group. They wished to design a program called the Circle of Trust. The Circle of Trust aims to help adolescents and young adults make successful transitions into adulthood. Fraser asked the student consultant group to verify what services they should offer, determine what type of staff is required, and explore how programs are traditionally funded.

We examined 14 different agencies by reviewing websites and obtaining interviews with staff members at several organizations. Most agencies used generally accepted behavior modification techniques which were appropriate for transition age youth. Four of the agencies were funded through a special federal grant. They were required to use the same model as a condition of receiving this grant. All of the agencies showed success is possible when working with this population.

Our recommendations for Fraser LTD are based on techniques that have been proven and recommended by industry leaders. Fraser should not build this project from the ground up. Transition age youth want jobs, homes, mental and physical health care, fulfilling personal relationships, and good educations. They just need help when they have difficulty putting all of those pieces together. Fraser should provide residential programs, offer peer mentoring programs, and find employment opportunities for transition age youth. Fraser should also perform outreach activities and collaborate with local authorities to make the Circle of Trust a community-based organization.