

Testimony
Engrossed Senate Bill 2313-Department of Human Services
House Human Services Committee
Representative Robin Weisz, Chairman

March 6, 2019

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee, I am Pamela Sagness, Director of the Behavioral Health Division of the Department of Human Services (Department). I appear today to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2313.

An estimated 12% to 25% of North Dakota students have an emotional or behavioral disorder¹. The state's youth surveys continue to see increasing rates of depression and suicidal thoughts. The Behavioral Health System Study published in April of 2018 noted, "we observed particular challenges for families with complex behavioral health needs that result in multi-system involvement" and "a common theme in stakeholder interviews was a need for a more comprehensive continuum of services for children and youth". Four specific recommendations were created to enhance and streamline the system of care for children and youth with complex needs:

1. Improve coordination between education, early childhood, and service systems for children and youth.
2. Expand targeted, proactive in-home supports for families with children and youth at risk of foster care placement and justice involvement.
3. Develop a coordinated system for enhancing treatment foster care capacity and increasing the cultural responsiveness of foster care placements.
4. Prioritize residential treatment for children and youth with the most significant and complex needs.

Senate Bill 2313 supports the implementation of these goals by:

- directing the Department of Human Services to develop a system of services and supports for children at risk of or identified as having a behavioral health condition and their families.
- Creating a Children’s Cabinet to assess, guide and coordinate the care for children across the state’s branches of government and tribal nations. Which will replace the Task Force on Children’s Behavioral Health and
- Creating a commission on juvenile justice to review and update juvenile justice policy over the next 6 years.

This concludes my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions.

ⁱ Forness, S.R., Kim, J., & Walker, H.M. (2012). Prevalence of students with EBD: Impact on general education. *Beyond Behavior*, 21(2), 3-10. Retrieved from: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ975007>