

HRSA/MCHB 2007 FEDERAL/STATE PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Building Blocks for Promising Practice Models

October 14 - 17, 2007

Deficit Reduction Family Style: Understanding the DRA, the FOA and the \$\$\$ for Families

DONENE FEIST: Thank you. I'm going to talk a little bit about how we worked really hard to get the Family Opportunity Act in North Dakota passed.

In the background there, it's kind of faded, but it's a picture from our lake lot. And I want to show you how beautiful the sunsets are in North Dakota because you're going to hear some things that aren't so nice about North Dakota, but we love it there.

As Linda said that we were the first in the country to get the FOA passed. And I want you to note how I'm smiling on that picture, because as Governor Holburn was signing that bill, I was holding my breath because we worked so doggone hard to get that bill passed; I wasn't quite sure it was actually going to happen. And I was hoping that I didn't pass out, really. (Laughter).

But I had good support behind me. Senator Mather and Senator Dever were behind me. Senator Dever is on the very far right. He was actually not a sponsor of our bill but he was one of our very good champions. So you need both your sponsors and your champions to carry the message forward.

We passed our Family Opportunity Act at 200% of the federal poverty level. Much to our dismay we wanted to get it at a 300%. But that means that there's room for lots of work, and we'll be right back in there again. But we're happy that we got it at 200%, because quite honestly we weren't sure we were going to get anything at all. So this was great.

The premiums are at 5% of the monthly gross income; and for a family of four it's estimated it's going to be about \$117 a month premium. Families are really going to have to identify if their out-of-pocket expenses outweigh the cost of buying into Medicaid at this point.

This is a map of North Dakota. On the west you see Fargo and then you see our state capital in Bismarck. Those are our two metropolises. And everything around Minot and Dickinson is all rural country; a lot of open spaces.

The smiley faces are where the Family Voices staff and board members are at.

Way down at the bottom is where I live, in a little town called Edgely.

We have 70% of our 53 counties are considered frontier in North Dakota with 13 cities having just a population over 6,000. We have 9.3 persons per square mile in North Dakota. So it's not like it is in Washington D.C. (Laughter).

We also have some pretty extreme weather nine months out of the year which contributes to a lot of the isolation and travel difficulties. And this I got out of your Title V Block Grant, you guys. (Laughter).

Want you to know, our highs get as high as 109, 110, and with the Heat Index of 125, and I can verify that, because we do some drag racing in the summer on the pavement, and I'm thinking it's even higher than 125.

And then our winter low sometimes we do get 43 below zero, and with the wind chill it gets to about 100 below. So we have a little variance, but it's a beautiful state.

(Laughter) I'm telling you.

[END OF SEGMENT]