

Testimony on modernizing raffle laws in North Dakota
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Good morning, Chairman Cook and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity for me to share information with all of you about the short-comings of current raffle laws that have been increasingly evident in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic, social distancing, and the restrictions on large, in-person gatherings.

My name is Thomas Hill and I serve as the chair for the North Dakota State Association of United Ways. I also serve as the Vice President of Community Impact for United Way of Cass-Clay in Fargo, ND. There are seven active chapters of United Ways in Fargo, Grand Forks, Jamestown, Minot, Bismarck, Dickinson and Williston.

United Way are present and active in every region of our state, serving to support local needs and to provide funding for critical nonprofit health and human services. As chapters, we focus on local needs and are supported largely by corporate and individual gifts from local and area businesses. United Way has been present in local communities across in ND for over 90 years. All throughout that time and especially today, we are committed to our mission of activating resources to solve complex community issues and create lasting social change. Annually, United Ways across ND raise and invest over \$11M to support local individuals' and families' needs. Our fundraising efforts help to offset the local and state tax burdens, ensuring we can fill necessary gaps in human services by allowing us to provide critical funding for nonprofits addressing homelessness, hunger, mental health needs and independent living for our friends and neighbors.

Locally, over half of our annual revenue comes from individual gifts. These are made through multiple channels, from payroll deduction, multi-year gifts, and fundraising from special events. Special events, such as jeans days, cook-offs, raffles, bingo, and other events, have provided critical resources for our local chapters to support the needs of our nonprofit community.

We also have seen large trends moving towards online giving over the past 10 years. There is a growing acceptance of the use of online giving to help provide ease and convenience for donors who wish to support local nonprofits. The current law hinders efforts to reach out and provide options to donors who wish to support local charities by participating in online raffles and charitable fundraising through online raffles.

Now more than ever, the health and financial stability of our friends and neighbors are being affected due to COVID-19, which makes many of our partner programs and additional community services more critical than ever. This intensifies for families who were living on the edge of poverty prior to the current situation. United Ways across ND are actively working in coordination with community partners to mobilize volunteers and resources to support community needs in a safe and effective way for all those involved.

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Due to the limitations of in-person gatherings and social distancing, we have had to pivot our fundraising efforts to a virtual and online format. In November, our United Way hosted a fundraiser called, LIVE UNITED GIVE UNITED. This event was conducted largely online. We had many vendors and business partners who were willing to donate items to be included in a raffle, although due to the current law, we were unable to hold an online raffle-this equated to a significant loss of revenue-revenue that would have supported local needs to prevent and divert families from experiencing homelessness.

I want to be clear, this is about our ability to modernize our fundraising efforts. Dollars raised from raffles go directly back into the community and support our efforts to meet and address health and human service needs, such as feeding programs and homeless prevention. This is about fundraising, not gambling. This is about helping to bring e-commerce laws up-to-date with 21st Century giving trends and continuing to give local nonprofits the ability to fundraise so we can meet the needs of our communities.

United Ways of North Dakota support the proposed change of the current law and encourage a DO PASS recommendation.

Respectfully,

Thomas Hill
Vice President of Community Impact | United Way of Cass-Clay
Chair, ND State Association of United Ways

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United Way of Cass-Clay improves lives by activating resources to solve complex community issues and creates lasting social change.

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