

Submitted to the House Human Services Committee Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 2387 March 12, 2025

Chairman Ruby, members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Anna Frissell. I am employed by Youthworks. I am testifying in opposition to House Bill 2387 to request the bill be amended to cover sexual trafficking of youth and adult victims. Youthworks serves North Dakota youth and families, providing services to run-away, homeless, exploited and trafficked youth and young adults. We provide direct services and intensive case management, including such services as supervision of students suspended from school, individual intake and assessment, individual counseling, appropriate service referrals, advocacy, transportation crisis response and shelter and transitional living options. We also support youth, young adults and families by providing training and education, as well as guardian ad litem services through the courts. House Bill 2387 proposes to modify the provisions of the North Dakota Criminal Code, entitled, Fair Treatment of Victims and Witnesses, 12.1-34, N.D.C.C., by adding a definition of "sexual assault victim advocate." The definition in the bill only includes victim advocates employed by a "domestic violence sexual assault organization or from a children's advocacy center." The definition proposed in the bill does not include advocates from organizations like Youthworks. Youthworks and other advocacy organizations routinely provide trained advocates who work with trafficked individuals and sexual violence victims and may provide the advocacy services requested by the victim. For the above reasons, we request that the definition of "sexual assault victim advocate" be broadened to read: "A victim advocate from a domestic violence sexual assault organization, a children's advocacy center or from an organization providing services to child or adult victims of sexual trafficking or other sexual violence. Finally, a "sexual violence survivor" is defined in House Bill 2387 as an individual who is a victim of a list sexual offenses located in Chapter 12.1-20 N.D.C.C. We request that the list of crimes in the bill be expanded to include human trafficking crimes involving sexual violence: 12.1-41-02, 12.1-41-03, and 12.1-41-04. Thank you for considering this testimony and the requests to broaden the definitions of "sexual assault victim advocate" and "sexual violence survivor."