

Testimony Neutral for HB 1003
Senate Appropriations Committee
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Chairmen and members of this committee,

Good morning chairman and members of this committee. My name is Shayla Davila, and I am a survivor of human trafficking. Thank you for allowing me to share my truth today regarding this bill.

I want to be clear—I am not neutral on the need for funding for survivors. Survivors absolutely need support, resources, and services. Where my neutrality lies is with the Office that will be responsible for distributing and overseeing these funds.

A little about me—I was a young mother when I was trafficked. My children were used as leverage to force me into situations I did not want to be in. I was treated as nothing more than a sex object, brutalized regularly, and forced to witness unimaginable violence against other women. There were moments when I truly believed I would not survive. By some miracle, I escaped my trafficker. But let me be clear—escape is not the end of a survivor's suffering.

For years, I struggled to rebuild my life. Criminal charges stemming from my trafficking experience made it nearly impossible to find housing or a decent job. And even beyond those logistical barriers, I have had to live every single day with PTSD, with fear, and with the deep, painful feeling that I would never be enough. Trauma doesn't just fade—it affects every relationship, every opportunity, and every part of life moving forward.

I started to find hope when I connected with the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force. The trauma-informed individuals who worked there at the time made a life-changing impact on me. They understood survivors, supported us, and truly prioritized our well-being. But those people—the ones who made a difference—are no longer there. They have been replaced by BCI agents.

From a survivor's perspective, and from anyone who understands victim services, this is a serious problem. Many trafficking survivors have had deeply traumatic experiences with law enforcement. If BCI had been in charge when I first connected with the task force, I would have run the other way. The shift in leadership has not only deprioritized victim-centered approaches, but it has actively led to the revictimization of survivors.

I have voiced these concerns to the Attorney General's Office multiple times. I have made every attempt to be heard. And yet, I have never received so much as a call back. That, in itself, speaks volumes. It is one thing to sit here and say all the right things in order to receive funding, but it is another thing entirely to truly stand by survivors and walk the walk.

If this state is truly committed to supporting trafficking victims, then I urge you to listen to survivors. Hear our concerns. Appoint an entity to manage these funds that has proven—through action, not just words—that they truly care about survivors. That is the only

way to ensure this funding is used in a way that genuinely helps those who need it most.

Thank you for your time.