

Senate Appropriations Committee
House Bill 1003 - Human Trafficking Victims Grants

Chairman Holmberg

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Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Stacy Schaffer and I am the Program Coordinator for the Demand Reduction Program and Executive Director of 31:8 Project.

The Demand Reduction Program (DRP) is an intermediate sentencing, diversion and education option for those charged with misdemeanor prostitution or human trafficking. This program was added to the North Dakota Century Code during the 2015 Legislative Session. DRPs are sometimes referred to as “John Schools” with the goal of reducing recidivism rates for participants. It educates on the impact of prostitution and sex trafficking on communities, survivors, spouses, and children.

After introduction of the DRP in 2015, the first class was held in 2017. The educational courses are offered quarterly and can be hosted in the following communities: Fargo, Bismarck, Grand Forks, Watford City, and Minot. Since the inception of the program, twenty-one offenders have completed the program. Attendees ranged in age from 20-54 years old from various rural and urban areas in North Dakota. To increase awareness about the program among judges, attorneys, and law enforcement officers, I conduct outreach and education to individuals around the state, reaching over 1,500 people in 2019. As a result, there has been an increase in referrals to the program through law enforcement, probation officers, and prosecutors recommending the DRP as a sentencing option for judges. This program also incorporates input from survivors of human trafficking. As the program grows and generates additional revenue, it will provide support for victim services.

I believe it is critical that financial support is available to help reduce the demand as part of prevention. As one participant of the DRP stated, “I have learned a great deal about Human Trafficking from this class, it has been an eye opener for me. I hope this education can continue to be a mainstream in our community.” Thank you for your time and consideration.