

Testimony Prepared for the
House Human Services Committee

March 14, 2023

By: Kim Jacobson, Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director

RE: Senate Bill 2087 – TANF Administration

Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Kim Jacobson. I am the Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director, which includes the service area of Traill and Steele Counties. In addition, I serve as President of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. Please consider my testimony in support of SB 2087.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is an economic assistance program administered by human service zones. This program assists the lowest income and most economically fragile families with young children. At the same time, TANF is the most highly regulated and technical program both to participate in and administer.

As human service zones, our goal is to work as one, with each other and with the Department, to support strong healthy families. The efforts of SB 2087 would provide needed modernization of the TANF program. Many of our current policies and laws surrounding TANF are over twenty-five years old and stem from 1997's Welfare Reform Reauthorization Act.

The change in funding structure called for in SB 2087 is also supported. This involves shifting federal TANF funds back to the TANF program. It is understood that some child welfare services in North Dakota are funded using existing TANF funds. This change would require appropriation of General Fund dollars to replace the transferred funds to support child welfare services. For healthy strong families, North Dakota needs to support both TANF and child welfare services.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony. I stand for questions from the committee.