

Testimony Prepared for the  
**House Human Services Committee**  
March 6, 2023  
By: Dennis Meier, Three Rivers Human Service Zone Director

**RE: Senate Bill 2341 – related to trafficked youth**

Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Services Committee, my name is Dennis Meier. I am the Three River Human Service Zone Director, which includes the service area of Grant, Morton, Sioux Counties. In addition, I am a member of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. Please consider my testimony in opposition of SB 2341.

In North Dakota, Human Service Zone Directors serve as the legal custodian of foster children. In addition, human service zones are charged with the legal authority and duty to place foster children, to provide case management services, and to provide in-home/prevention related services to children and families throughout North Dakota. This is a critical and important responsibility and one that brings many challenges.

As a human service zone director, I have ongoing concern about the provision and availability of appropriate placement and treatment options for children. Our current system lacks services and placements not only for trafficked youth, but many children with an array of needs and diagnosis. Simply said, we need every current service plus more to meet the needs of North Dakota children.

My concern about SB 2341 is that there is no fiscal note. I ask the committee to consider if this bill is approved, where will the funding come from for this highly specialized program? Will the Department be requested to incur this cost within their approved budget? If so, will other services that would serve a greater number of children and families be cut to provide this highly specialized service to a few? From my knowledge of specialized treatment

costs, it would be a fair estimate that this type of program could cost up to \$500,000 for one youth for the eighteen to twenty-four months of the proposed program. I am concerned that if SB 2341 is enacted, other critical services to children may be lost.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I stand for questions from the committee.