

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

SB2341

North Dakota Senate Appropriations Committee

Testimony from Sgt. Mike Bolme, Investigator, Bismarck Police Department

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sgt. Mike Bolme and I'm an investigator for the Bismarck Police Department. I submit this testimony today in favor of SB 2341.

I am a twenty-year police veteran and for six years have been a member of the Bismarck Human Trafficking Multidisciplinary Team. During that time, I have met with numerous youth who were victims of human trafficking. Many of those youth were victims of familial trafficking which is especially traumatic. I can tell you those victims need a vast array of support and care, and it takes a special kind of professional in the right setting to keep those youth on track for recovery. As a detective I have worked with all kinds of victims, but human trafficking victims suffer from the most complex trauma imaginable and require a vast array of services and support. Our local multidisciplinary team (and the ND Human Trafficking Task Force) does a fantastic job of supporting those youth, but the one thing we struggle with the most is the lack of residential treatment. We simply have nothing in our state to address this shortcoming and constantly struggle

I have toured facilities in Minnesota and South Dakota which address the needs of those states and am heartened by the possibilities of having such a facility here in North Dakota. The vast majority of North Dakotans do not realize this happens in our state, but trafficked youth take up a tremendous amount of time and resources from law enforcement and service providers. Residential treatment centers not only address the complex trauma issues those victims deal with, they also assist law enforcement and States Attorneys in keeping the victims stable and on track with prosecution. Victim-centered investigations and prosecutions require this type of support, which in turn gives us better witness testimony when it comes time to hold the traffickers accountable.

We have the professional competency in our state to deal with all of those complex issues. Law enforcement, prosecutors, children's advocacy centers, social services, youthworks, Dakota Boys and Girls Ranch, and Home on the Range (and many others) all work together to address the needs of victims of human trafficking. The main requirement we are lacking is a place to house and shelter those victims while we work on their extremely nuanced and complex needs. I am asking today for a "do pass" recommendation for SB 2341 to assist us in our efforts for those victims.

Sgt. Mike Bolme  
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