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**House Bill No. 1145**  
**House Judiciary Committee**  
**Testimony Presented by Seth O'Neill**  
**January 11, 2023**

Chairman Klemin and members of the Committee. My name is Seth O'Neill and I am here today representing CAWS North Dakota in support of HB1145. CAWS North Dakota is the statewide coalition of the domestic violence and sexual assault programs located across the state.

Our programs serve victims of sexual assault across North Dakota and in 2021 we served 1,139 victims. Victims of sexual assault experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder at a high rate. In one study, 75% of sexual assault victims met criteria for a post-traumatic stress disorder diagnosis one month after the incident.<sup>1</sup> Through our work, we know that this trauma is made worse through the countless times a victim must share their experience in order to get a conviction in the criminal justice system.

We support this bill because we believe it is important to allow victims who suffer from a disabling mental condition as a result of the offense to receive the proper treatment before their offender is charged. This treatment will allow them to navigate the difficulties of the criminal justice system in a healthy manner without the compounding difficulties of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

I appreciate your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Dworkin, E. R., Jaffe, A. E., Bedard-Gilligan, M., & Fitzpatrick, S. (2021). PTSD in the Year Following Sexual Assault: A Meta-Analysis of Prospective Studies. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 0(0).  
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