

**Support SB 2067
North Dakota House Judiciary Committee**

March 13, 2023

Chairman Klemin and members of the House Judiciary Committee, my name is Kristie Wolff, I am the Communications and Engagement Coordinator for Central Dakota Forensic Nurse Examiners (CDFNE).

CDFNE is a North Dakota based non-profit organization providing forensic medical services to children and adult survivors of sexual assault in western North Dakota. I am testifying today in support of SB 2067.

CDFNE forensic nurses have the privilege of working alongside Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) staff in western North Dakota. We work together as members of multidisciplinary teams that respond to reports of criminal sexual conduct against children. Prior to providing forensic medical examinations for youth at the CAC, our staff observe the forensic interview to better understand what medical services a child may need. We repeatedly witness the expertise of the forensic interviewers, their unique understanding of child development, and their extensive knowledge in addressing trauma in children.

Adequate funding of services provided by the CACs in our state, including forensic interviews, is crucial to guarantee child victims of sexual assault have services available to them for the best possible outcomes.

While we fully support this policy, the bill does not address the significant financial deficit that will be created by the change. Because of this, both myself and the Executive Director of the Children’s Advocacy Center of ND testified in front of the House Appropriations Education and Environment Division on March 8th asking for increased funding for Forensic Exams. Since it’s inception, the fund has reimbursed SANE programs across the state for forensic medical exams for adults and children. Both state and federal law prohibit SANE programs from charging for forensic medical exams.

The federal Violence Against Women Act requires any state that wants to be eligible for certain federal grants to certify that the state covers the cost of medical forensic exams for people who

have been sexually assaulted. North Dakota Century Code 12.1-34-07 states “When an acute forensic medical examination is performed, the costs incurred by a health care facility or health care professional for performing the acute forensic medical examination or any preliminary medical screening examination may not be charged, either directly or through a third-party payer, to the alleged victim.” There is identical language for a child forensic medical exam in the same section of code.

If SB 2067 is passed, we ask that the members of this committee work closely with your colleagues in House Appropriations to secure adequate funding.

In conclusion, I am asking you to give a DO PASS recommendation to SB 2067 with consideration for how the changes will be funded.

Thank you,
Kristie Wolff
kristie.cdfne@midconetwork.com
701-751-4884