Domestic Violence Crisis Center

Domestic Violence Crisis Center, Inc.
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House Bill No. 1350
House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Testimony Presented by Tara Bjornson, MA
Email: tara@dvccminot.org
January 26, 2023

Chairman Porter and members of the Committee,

Good afternoon, my name is Tara Bjornson and I am the assistant director at the Domestic Violence Crisis Center (DVCC) in Minot, ND. I have been in this role for ten years and during that time I have overseen direct services provided to victims of domestic and sexual assault, been certified as a protection order advocate, and chaired the local Community Response to Victimization and Sexual Assault Response Teams, the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force Victim Services Subdivision, and most recently, assisted in forming the Domestic Violence High-Risk Team in Minot.

I am here to testify in opposition to House Bill 1350, specifically as it relates to the restoration of the right to possess firearms. The proposed language conflicts with 18 U.S.C. 922(g), which states that “federal law prohibits purchase and possession of firearms and ammunition by people who have been convicted in any court of a “misdemeanor crime of domestic violence,” and/or who are subject to certain domestic violence protective orders”. The Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution (Article VI, Paragraph 2) provides that federal law takes precedence over state laws, which would inherently supersede any state law.

This proposal also puts law enforcement and victims of interpersonal violence in further danger of being killed. Domestic violence calls are among the most dangerous calls for law enforcement response. Additionally, firearms are often used to intimidate and control victims in violent relationships and account for more than half of intimate partner homicides every year. There is a strong correlation between domestic violence fatality and firearms, and numerous studies have shown that domestic violence is often a precursor to mass shootings. In fact, 21% of new victims served by our agency reported being threatened with a weapon in 2022.

I am respectfully asking you Do Not Pass HB1350.
Sincerely,
Tara M. Bjornson, MA Forensic Psychology
Assistant Director, DVCC