

Testimony in support of SB 2003

Senate Appropriations Committee

Emily Schwartz, North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force

January 23, 2023

Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I come before you today, along with several colleagues, to highlight the work in North Dakota to combat human trafficking during the last biennium, to provide a summary of how funds appropriated in the 2021 Legislative Session were utilized, and to urge this committee to recommend a “do pass” on SB 2003, which will continue funding for anti-trafficking work in North Dakota. Attached to this summary you will find a description of the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force’s (NDHTTF) work in the state, statistics on victim services and investigations data, and a map illustrating the communities in North Dakota where NDHTTF multidisciplinary teams operate and where victims were located. Human trafficking, including labor and sex trafficking, occurs statewide and affects rural and urban communities alike. The data we have collected since 2016 demonstrates that human trafficking continues to be a significant problem in North Dakota. The State’s financial support is critical to the success that victim service organizations and law enforcement have had in building a coordinated, effective response, and in collecting data to support this work. We therefore ask that you recommend a “do pass” on SB 2003, allowing this important work to continue.

Some background information on the utilization of funds appropriated in the 2021 biennium are as follows:

- Human trafficking services were funded at \$1,101,879 in the 2021 session, \$1,400,000 in 2019, \$825,000 in 2017, and \$1,250,000 in 2015.

- The Attorney General’s Drug and Violent Crime Policy Board distributed funds. The Attorney General’s Office created an application and held hearings with the Board, granting money to nine organizations.
  - Agencies receiving funding include the Abused Adult Resource Center (AARC), Community Violence Intervention Center (CVIC), Dakota Children’s Advocacy Center (DCAC), Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Center (DVRCC), Family Crisis Shelter (FCS), Red River Children’s Advocacy Center (RRCAC), Youthworks, Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA), and Prevent Child Abuse North Dakota (PCAND) on behalf of the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force (NDHTTF). The funding predominantly supports direct services to suspected and confirmed trafficked individuals located in their home communities. This includes:
    - Specialized services, case managers and advocates, Regional Navigators, a Labor Trafficking Specialist, NDHTTF Director and Grant Tech positions, training and travel support, supplies for victim survivors, and contracts with Survivor Leader Advisors who can best inform the work done in the state.
    - A Human Trafficking Fund (HT Fund), administered through the NDHTTF, which was created to support victim survivors throughout their healing, from first point of contact through long-term healing. Some examples of eligible services include medical, mental health supports, housing, job training, and legal needs. Any organization in North Dakota serving a survivor can request funding by submitting a reimbursement request form. Any request over \$250.00 goes through review by a

multidisciplinary team for approval prior to being submitted to the Attorney General's Office for final approval.

- Funding appropriated through the Attorney General's Office is only available on a reimbursement basis. Organizations are required to provide documentation, receipts, and activity logs for employees, and the submitted costs are evaluated by the Attorney General's Office for allowability before they are reimbursed with state funds.
- The Attorney General's office reaches out to grantees to ensure that money is obligated and will be spent within the allotted timeframe. Reallocations have historically been made to move funds between grantees from those who indicated they would not be able to spend their funding to the grantees that indicated they needed additional funding.
- State funds were utilized as match funding for federal grants. The NDHTTF has received the Enhanced Collaborative Model Task Force grant through the Department of Justice, a key source of funding to support statewide work, and utilizes this state funding to support the match requirement.
  - State dollars are critical to accessing federal funding opportunities as almost all programs have 25% match requirement.
  - Significant delays in releasing the awarded federal funds have occurred. Without these state funds, employees would have been furloughed or laid off, and the HT Fund would not have funding to serve victim survivors' needs.
- I'd like to highlight some key data points found in the supporting documents I've submitted today for testimony:
  - Since the NDHTTF began collecting data on January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2022 , the NDHTTF has served 700 suspected and confirmed victim survivors of trafficking.

- Youth comprise 29% of our caseload, and adults 71%.
- Sex trafficking is 85% of the caseload, labor trafficking 5%, sex and labor 9%, and other 1%.
- The NDHTTF Operational Team has assisted in 4,440 instances of technical assistance requests.
- 257 investigations into trafficking have been conducted.
  - 93% of investigations were for sex trafficking, 5% were labor trafficking, and sex and labor were 2%.
- The number of trainings conducted statewide is 507, with the NDHTTF specifically targeting key sectors to include medical professionals, law enforcement, EMS, social services, domestic violence and sexual assault service providers, and other key agencies likely to come into contact with victim survivors and screen for identification and referral.
- 82% of victims served were North Dakota residents.

The NDHTTF is recognized as a national leader by other task forces, especially those being developed statewide with rural populations, and regularly mentors newer task forces across the nation seeking to develop similar coordinated programming between victim serving agencies and law enforcement. Since beginning this work in 2015, developing partnerships, protocols, and enhancing services, the NDHTTF has collectively done incredible work with this funding in a short period of time. It is imperative that we continue to build upon the lessons we learn to consistently find innovative ways to better meet the needs for all victim survivors of trafficking. I appreciate the opportunity to share the important work of the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force, and our partners, with you. Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions.



## *media talking points*

### **Who We Are**

The North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force is a collaborative team made up of law enforcement, prosecution, and service providers at federal, state, and local levels.

### **What We Do**

We are a team that responds to victims of sex and labor trafficking; providing comprehensive services, investigating traffickers and solicitors, and prosecuting offenders. The NDHTTF is the nexus for a network of law enforcement and service providers to work in tandem to build capacity and combat trafficking statewide.

### **Who We Serve**

All trafficking victims regardless of immigration status, gender, or form of trafficking receive support in accessing the services they need.

### **Where We Serve**

NDHTTF serves the entire state of North Dakota.

### **Why We Exist**

NDHTTF exists to prevent, detect, disrupt, and dismantle human trafficking.

### **How We Do It**

- Train communities to identify exploitation and trafficking and provide points of contact
- Train local multidisciplinary teams to respond to victims and investigate trafficking-related crime
- Assist response agencies and communities with the development of response protocol
- Provide technical assistance to local response teams upon request
- Investigate trafficking related crime
- Prosecute offenders and provide victims with restitution
- Engagement in national anti-trafficking best practices and sharing of resources
- Build networks for victims to access services and resources





700

Number of Human Trafficking Victims Served in North Dakota

Youth: 29%

Adults: 71%

Sex: 85%

Labor: 5%

Sex & Labor: 9%

Other 1%

257

Number of Investigations

Sex: 93%

Labor: 5%

Sex & Labor: 2%

507

Number of Trainings conducted Statewide

4,440

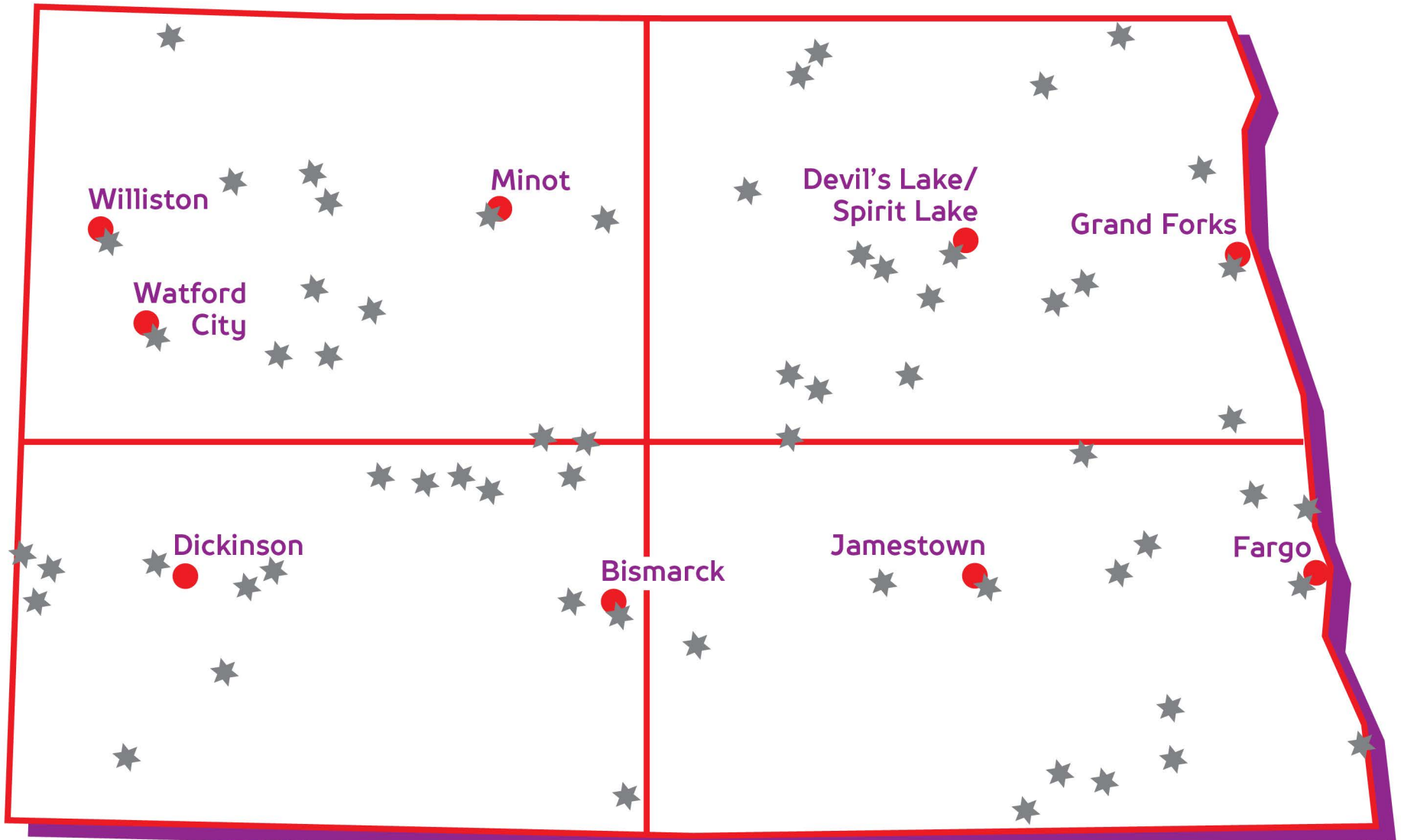
Number of Technical Assistance Calls to NDHTTF Operational Team

Data provided: January 1st, 2016 through December 31st, 2022

## results of ndhttf work

- The NDHTTF operates nine multi-disciplinary teams (MDTS) to provide local response to exploited and trafficked individuals. Locations include Williston, Watford City, Dickinson, Minot, Bismarck, Devils Lake/Spirit Lake, Jamestown, Grand Forks, and Fargo.
- The NDHTTF hosts a human trafficking fund that provides short and long-term resources to any victim in the state. The most requested services are for housing, behavioral health, medical/dental, legal assistance, basic needs and transportation.
- Training has yielded better, more accurate identification of suspected and confirmed labor and sex trafficking victims by law enforcement, community providers, and the public. Training includes best practices when working with victims and how to successfully investigate trafficking.
- Service providers and law enforcement have demonstrated continued commitment to survivors. Ongoing access to services is critical as approximately 80% of victims served are North Dakota residents.

# NORTH DAKOTA HUMAN TRAFFICKING MDT & TRAFFICKING CASES MAP



● MDT Community    ★ Communities Where Trafficking has been Identified