

Senate Appropriations Committee  
Testimony In Support of Senate Bill 2003  
January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Chairman and Members of the Committee.

For the record, my name is Sarah Matthews, I am the director of the Red River Children's Advocacy Center (RRCAC), with offices in Fargo and Grand Forks. We serve children who are the victims of sexual and physical abuse, neglect and exploitation from up and down the Red River Valley. I am testifying today in support of Senate Bill 2003.

Some of you may know, Children's Advocacy Center's (CAC) play an important role in criminal justice and mental health but also rely on the help of our medical partners. This proposed legislation would aid our states CAC's and the victims we serve tremendously. By increasing funding our partners can help victims receive the care and treatment they need after sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse, human trafficking and other crimes. They are specially trained and catalog evidence that may be used in a court case or proceeding which greatly assists our mission to seek justice for victims. These professionals educate our team, families and public about sexual assault and its effects on victims. They help CAC's in the important victim advocacy and support work we provide. This increase in funding would help our medical partners maintain their training and continue to provide necessary exams for our CAC's.

In 2022 our center saw a 25% increase in services and the numbers continue to climb for all CAC's. As frontline responders to child abuse, neglect and

exploitation these exams are an absolute necessity in some cases. In fact 1 in 7 children will be abused before their 18th birthday and sometimes the only way to stop the abuser is to find physical evidence which these exams can provide.

With these staggering statistics we want to continue to make an impact in our state. We are glad that more children are being referred to us and we want to be able to provide them with exceptional services. We can only do this with the help of our medical partners and the proper funding to help them succeed.

I respectfully ask the committee to recommend a DO PASS on SB 2003.

Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you today and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank You.