

March 8, 2023

Senator Dick Dever, Chairman
North Dakota Legislature
Senate Appropriations Committee/Human Resources Division
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Chairman Dever and Members of the Senate Appropriations/HR Division Committee,

My name is Jill McDonald, I am the executive director of the Domestic Violence Crisis Center in Minot. I support HB 1004 providing additional funding for Crisis Centers.

Our agency and many of my colleagues across the state have been in place for over four decades in North Dakota. Our services use evidence-based methods to respond to the most heinous situations, such as sexual assault, domestic abuse, and human trafficking. I was appointed executive director seven years ago. But as a student in the late 1990's I was a volunteer. Little did I know then that I would join this team of Advocates years later. I am so grateful I did. These services are life-changing and, for some, lifesaving.

Domestic Violence Crisis Center works collaboratively to provide a coordinated response to domestic and sexual abuse calls with law enforcement and other community partners. This collaboration has been developed over decades of communication and respect for each agency's role in responding to some of the most dangerous cases in our community. Hundreds of these calls pour in each year.

In 2022 alone in Minot, over 750 calls were placed to law enforcement requiring a response. Of these calls, 21 individuals were determined through the Danger Assessment to be at extremely high risk of being killed by an abusive partner. These cases were staffed by a coordinated Domestic Violence High-Risk Team (DVHRT). Our law enforcement partners assess the abusive partner in these cases using the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment, indicating the likelihood they will re-offend. The individuals that score higher than an 8 commit more assaults sooner and cause more injuries than those offenders with lower scores.

Strangulation was identified in 76% of the cases identified as high-risk. I ask you to really think about that. Strangulation is so intimate and horrific because it intentionally takes a victim to and from the brink of death. A plethora of medical challenges can follow strangulation that can impact that victim far beyond the incident. These are the life and death cases we and our law enforcement partners see and respond to in our communities.

When the DVHRT coordinates resources, we provide a variety of services. We keep safety at the forefront of our minds. We have provided security cameras that gave some peace of mind to sleep as survivors moved out of our shelter and into the community to begin the next phase of their lives.

Since becoming a director, I learned that communities could not simply provide services for the victim and expect change. In 2021, when LSS closed, DVCC and many sister agencies stepped up and began domestic violence offender treatment (intervention). This provides an abusive partner with education on healthy relationships from staff that understand the dynamics of domestic violence, and unlike traditional therapy, coordinates information with the criminal just.

Minot has also lost our provider for supervised visitation. A partnering agency provided this service. This means that since the last legislative session, two agencies that did support work after violence had occurred no longer do. That terrifies our team and the survivors we serve. Imagine not having a safe place to exchange your children with your abusive partner. For now, these families must travel to Bismarck or Devil's Lake.

We need more resources. We have several programs that are mandated in statute, and we have been entrusted to carry out the services. We have done so diligently and with solid outcomes. We came to our partners here at the Department of Health and said, "The crisis centers are in crisis." They heard us and recommended our full request. The executive budget did increase our prior funding but did not fulfill it all. The House Appropriations added to the executive request, and I stand before you asking you to invest in the total amount detailed below on behalf of CAWS North Dakota our state coalition of crisis centers.

Here is a breakdown of the \$17.65 million:

- The first number of each bullet is what is currently budgeted.
- The number in green is what we requested.
- The number in italics is what the executive team put forth for the legislature's consideration.

Domestic Violence General Funds (currently \$1.9M per biennium):

- Requesting \$10M/biennium, executive/recommended budget: \$2,686,285

· This amount represents the gap between our fundraising and state funding as well as our crime victim witness costs. Please note that several programs support crime victim witness services pro-bono, even though contracts for these advocacy services are administered through county state's attorney offices.

Domestic Violence Offender Treatment (currently \$300K per biennium)

- Requesting \$1.45M/biennium, executive/recommended budget: \$700,000

Supervised Visitation and Exchange (currently \$425K per biennium)

- Requesting \$2.2M/biennium, executive/recommended budget: \$0

Sexual Violence Prevention Funds (currently \$200K per biennium)

- Requesting \$4M/biennium, executive/recommended budget: \$0

· Allocations for this are currently significantly under resourced. The fund also does not provide for domestic violence prevention needs. Enhancing this fund's flexibility and capacity would offer significant savings to ND.

Total request: \$17.65M/biennium, executive/recommended budget: \$3,386,285

Thank you for your time. I stand for questions.

Sincerely,

Jill McDonald
Executive Director
Domestic Violence Crisis Center