Testimony Prepared for the
Senate Human Services Committee
March 20, 2023
By: Kim Jacobson, Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director

RE: House Bill 1036 – TANF Income Limits

Chair Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, my name is Kim Jacobson. I am the Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director, which includes the service area of Traill and Steele Counties. In addition, I serve as President of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. Please consider my testimony in support of HB 1036.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is an economic assistance program administered by human service zones. This program assists the lowest income and most economically fragile families with young children. At the same time, TANF is the most highly regulated and technical program both to participate in and administer.

Many of our current policies and laws surrounding TANF are over twenty-five years old and stem from 1997's Welfare Reform Reauthorization Act. North Dakota currently utilizes the standard of need for TANF equivalent to 22-25% of the federal poverty level. To help you understand how income restrictive this level of eligibility truly is, I refer you to the enclosed attachment. When looking at 25% of federal poverty level, a household of two would have an **annual income** of $4,930 or a **monthly income** of $411. This is shockingly low and outdated.

The TANF program, its educational and occupational supports are key to assisting low income, often single-parent households and their children. I urge you to pass HB 1036 which would increase the federal poverty level for TANF eligibility to approximately 50% of the federal poverty level ($9,860 annual or $822 monthly). While this threshold is also very low, it would make progress to assist our lowest income families while North Dakota has opportunity to study and modernize the TANF program.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony. I stand for questions from the committee.