

Senate Bill No. 2195 - In Favor

Written testimony only

January 30, 2023

Madam Chairman Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Angela Wambach, and I am the Executive Director of the Women's Care Center overseeing the Fargo and Devils Lake locations. I am providing testimony in favor of bill 2195. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony.

Today you will hear from my colleague, Rebecca Obrigewitch, Executive Director of the Bismarck Women's Care Center. We share the same model of care and similar business models. We work very closely with one another in the care of women of North Dakota.

I thought I would provide some additional information that is specific to each of the centers in which I oversee and would be beneficial for this bill.

In Fargo, we have nearly tripled the number of women that we serve over the past few years. And Devils Lake has nearly doubled the number of women they have served. The increase can also be seen in the number of pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, group visits, and one on one education visits that we provide. We have also expanded our group life skills classes to include both in-person classes and Zoom options. This helps us to serve more parents. We have also added a mom's support group and a nutrition course. We are adding a Strong Father's program and a few other short courses to best meet the needs of our clients.

This growth has been wonderful! But with such great growth, we also find ourselves having greater needs. We are providing more material assistance to women and families than ever before. I have increased our staffing to be able to better serve those coming through our doors. We have also seen inflation of the costs of medical supplies, office supplies, client care supplies, and labor costs. All of which have greatly impacted our overall expenses and ongoing budgeting.

Women's Care Centers are very professionally run. Our centers employ registered nurses, licensed social workers, licensed teachers, licensed counselors,

and other professionals. To retain or hire staff, we need to offer competitive wages. We are blessed to have volunteer medical directors. Each center has a local medical director for the center, and we have a volunteer Radiologist that oversees the ultrasound program and reads our ultrasound images and reports.

The funds we received through the American Rescue Funds in 2022 were greatly appreciated and supported our growth for the past year. Thank you!

The Devils Lake center has not been financially self-sufficient since they opened in 2008. The area of North Dakota that they are in does not have the same charity we see in other parts of the state. Fargo has been able to cover their deficit every year. But that is getting tougher to do and it is always a concern of our organization of how long we can continue to keep the doors open in Devils Lake. We have felt it was important to continue to keep those doors open because the women and families of that rural area need us too. It is our intent and determination to do so.

As we look forward, we know we are going to continue to see growth. And we still have more we would like to do to support the growth. In addition to the increased costs that I mentioned earlier. Devils Lake is need of another part-time person to help meet the needs of the clients on a daily basis. Fargo could use some renovations to add an additional ultrasound room and make a few changes to best support the growth of the services provided. Both locations could use funds for additional marketing and outreach efforts to increase awareness of our services. Our online presence is very effective in reaching women, but even the costs of Google have gone up considerably.

All our services are free and confidential. It is the generosity of our donors and limited grants that keep our doors open. I thank you for your consideration of this bill.