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Senate Bill 2195 – In Favor
Rebecca Obrigewitch, Executive Director
Women's Care Center Bismarck
January 30, 2023

Madam Chairman Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee,

My name is Rebecca Obrigewitch, and I am the Executive Director of the Women's Care Center in Bismarck. I am grateful for the opportunity to share information regarding the services we provide and the impact the funding proposed in bill 2195 would have on our mission. Our Bismarck location is one of three Women's Care Centers across the state with centers in Devil's Lake and Fargo as well. The information I will be sharing about our services pertains to all three locations.

At Women's Care Center, every woman who walks through our door finds a compassionate counselor who will listen without judgement and provide support for her unique situation, whether she is seeking a pregnancy test, an ultrasound, or education. Women are reminded of their inherent dignity and individual strengths, which become the foundation for nine out of ten of the women who come to Women's Care Center to choose to continue their pregnancy. At our Bismarck location, since opening, over 800 babies have been born to our moms. Last year alone, 194 babies were born to moms in this community.

A recent client shared that she was shocked and fearful about the possibility of a pregnancy. She was working two jobs, did not have health insurance, and her significant other was not aware of the potential pregnancy. When our client received positive test results, she requested information regarding adoption. After considering her options and what would be the best choice for her, she decided to make an adoption plan. She requested to meet with her adoption counselor at our center, which had become a safe and comfortable space for her.

Her adoption counselor attended education sessions with her to prepare for the birth of her child and agreed to be our client's support person at the birth since the client did not have anyone to be with her. We were able to accompany our client from her initial counseling session, as she prepared for the birth of her baby, and after her son's birth.

The care and compassion we offer to expectant mothers extends far beyond the birth of their child. We commit to accompanying women every step of the way, from when they first find out they are pregnant, until their youngest child goes to kindergarten. A huge component of what we do is building strong families in our state. We want families in North Dakota to have a great, healthy start. Babies born to Women's Care Center moms have higher birth weights, are properly fitted into car seats, and have parents who have been provided with safe sleep guidelines.

We partner education programs with incentive programs. Parents are equipped with the skills needed to help their families thrive and grow in self-sufficiency, while earning anything they could need for their baby.

Last year, 437 women made over 1,200 visits to our Bismarck center, more visits than ever before. Because of the generosity of our community, every one in six babies born in Burleigh County starts with Women's Care Center.

As we continue to serve more clients, provide more material assistance, and expand our class offerings, funds greatly impact our ability to serve every woman and every family who walks through our door with care, compassion, and support when they need it the most. The funding from this bill would not only allow us to continue to serve every client who needs our support but also to provide exceptional care and expand our services. The ability to bolster our advertising would have a tremendous impact on our ability to reach more women. The growing needs of our clients could be met by improving and expanding our center to accommodate more services. Funds for training would allow our staff to continue to offer the highest level of care possible.

Making full use of the funds we received last year allowed our agency to continue to grow to meet the needs of our clients, improve our center, and retain highly trained and qualified staff.

In closing, it is a privilege to work with the amazing, resilient families in our community who need support during an unexpected pregnancy and in their journey as parents. As we work together as a state to provide this support, thank you for your consideration of bill 2195, which would greatly impact and strengthen our ability to continue to serve expectant mothers, children, and families and to plan for sustainable growth.