

Testimony in support of HB 1003
House Appropriations Committee
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Chairman Nathe and Members of the Committee:

My name is Amy Boyd-Bolme; I am the Anti-Trafficking Program Manager at Youthworks. I come before you today to highlight the work that has gone on in North Dakota to fight the trafficking of youth in the last biennium, to provide a summary of how state funds received by Youthworks in the 2023 Legislative Session were utilized, and to urge this committee to recommend a “do pass” on HB 1003, including an increased amount of 500,000 dollars for a total of 1.6 million funds for Human Trafficking. Attached to this summary, you will find supporting budgetary information and statistics on victim services. One of the things I would like to highlight is the number of rural communities in North Dakota where victims were located and services were provided; 32% of North Dakota counties have been served as well as all 8 regions, representing every corner of North Dakota. We have provided services to clients in communities that are so small that I am not naming them, due to the concern of confidentiality. Trafficking victims were served from all five reservations: Mandan-Hidatsa-Arikara, Standing Rock, Spirit Lake, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. Youth living in rural, isolated areas, as well as those youth who experience poverty and sexual abuse, are extraordinarily vulnerable to traffickers who use those risk factors to groom and exploit them. It is critical that trafficked youth in these communities have access to support, education and resources. The funds

that Youthworks receives from the Attorney General's budget have been instrumental in ensuring that all of North Dakota's youth victims receive the services and support they need.

As a non-profit, Youthworks leverages its Attorney General funds as "match" money for federal grants- essentially tripling the impact of state dollars. For some historical perspective, Youthworks has been part of the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force (NDHTTF) and the Attorney General's commission since 2015 and has received state funding since 2017. We work closely with the BCI, the NDHTTF, local law enforcement, child welfare, domestic violence agencies, Children's Advocacy Centers, local prosecutors, and numerous other partners to respond to victims as part of a multi-disciplinary team. In the 2021-23 biennium, Youthworks received \$482,823 in state funding to serve youth victims statewide. We were able to use these dollars to leverage \$1,133,333.33 in federal funding. In the last biennium (2023-2025), our state funding was decreased by \$153,854 including funding for travelling to rural communities. This reduction put significant pressure on Youthworks to quickly address the deficit and find ways to maintain services throughout the biennium. We will be unable to sustain covering this deficit in the upcoming biennium and may need to forego federal funding if additional resources are not secured. Youthworks does not want to leave any federal funding on the table. This upcoming year, there will be a grant opportunity to increase Youthwork's federal funding to nearly \$2 million dollars in the biennium. However, this would require a match of \$327,500 state dollars per year. (655,000 for the biennium). Since 2015, Youthworks has had a 100% success rate in obtaining federal funds, having written and received six OVC grants in the last decade. The \$500,00 amended request by the Attorney General would essentially assure the 3:1 match referenced and expand services to the rural areas. With that in mind, I respectfully ask that you approve the increase to the Attorney General's Human Trafficking budget. Thank you.