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Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Stacy Schaffer, Executive Director of 31:8 Project, and I'm supporting HB 1003. Thank you for the opportunity to share information about 31:8 Project and the important work we are doing to combat human trafficking. Founded in 2015, **31:8 Project is a nonprofit organization located in Bismarck dedicated to raising awareness about human trafficking throughout North Dakota (ND)**. Our organization is unique in that we focus solely on providing services to adult victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. The funding we have received through the Attorney General's Human Trafficking Grant has a direct impact on the following program areas:

- **Demand Reduction Program (ND Century Code 12.1-29-07):** A major challenge in addressing human trafficking in North Dakota is the persistent demand for hiring others to engage in sexual activity. In an attempt to create long-term solutions to change the underlying systems that allow sex trafficking to occur, **the 2015 Legislative session voted in favor of creating the Demand Reduction Program (DRP), a comprehensive intermediate sentencing, diversion, and education option for offenders charged with or convicted of solicitation of sexual acts with individuals over 18 years of age. Managed by 31:8 Project, this is the only state program that focuses on reducing the demand for prostitution.** The DRP educates offenders on the risks and impacts of sex trafficking, providing tools to improve relationships that may have influenced their decisions. By fostering healthier relationships and communities in North Dakota, the program aims to reduce recidivism and increase awareness of trafficking's effects. **Since its inception, 33 offending participants (ages 20-67) have successfully completed the program.**
- **Providing Education:** In 2024, 31:8 Project delivered **166 trainings and presentations** (a 40% increase from 2023) to individuals of all ages, including school-based programs, law enforcement, healthcare, service providers and general public. This education includes human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and online safety.
- **Survivor Mentorship Program:** This program, launched in 2021, supports adult survivors of human trafficking over the age of 18. During the first year of the program, 31:8 Project worked with 10 survivors of human trafficking. **Since 2024, this number increased to 62 sex and labor trafficking survivors - 85% of these individuals were trafficked in North Dakota.** The ages of individuals served are 18-62 with 60% from urban communities and 40% rural.

31:8 Project receives the majority of its funding through private donations along with state and regional grants. This past biennium, we received a grant from the Attorney General's Office to assist us in the work highlighted above. However, these duties are performed by just one full-time and three part-time employees. Due to the significant increase in needed services, we are anticipating hiring an additional employee plus increasing hours for our three current part-time employees. With that being said, we are in support of an increase to the Attorney General's human trafficking budget.

Through 31:8 Project's efforts, we have been able to reduce demand, empower survivors, and educate communities, ensuring North Dakota remains steadfast in the prevention of human trafficking. As I conclude, you will hear from Piper Bjornsen, a lived-experience expert, that works closely with 31:8 Project. She will be sharing more regarding the impact of this grant. Thank you, and I stand for questions.