

February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Chairman Nelson and Members of the House Appropriations Committee (Human Resources Division),

Last week, we shared with you several data points that underscore the importance of the partnerships we are so fortunate to have with area law enforcement and our local court system. Many times, they are the first to respond to unsafe, unpredictable or potentially life-threatening calls.

Deputies' and officers' swift responses and referrals to our advocates often mean the difference between another night of fear or the first step toward freedom. We also partner with our local state's attorney's office to provide emotional support, court updates and case communication for victims of crime. Several of our agencies also support those who use violence through domestic violence intervention education. Haley Wamstad, a state's attorney in Grand Forks County, shares more in her written testimony which is attached to this bill hearing.

Because it is often unsafe or financially limited for survivors to leave, our national counterparts would tell you that it takes an average of seven times for individuals to exit abusive relationships. These partnerships are airtight, and we try not to take them for granted because sadly, they're still necessary. We trust officers and deputies with those we serve, and they trust us with next steps.

For some that means a few nights in a warm bed with fully stocked kitchen and a private door no one will break. For others, it's a welcome transition toward transportation, housing and therapy services. For individuals who come full circle, these first interactions with law enforcement not only provide a safe place to land, but they also serve as a conduit for healing and with any luck, prevention of future violence.

As someone who spends a lot of time with area law enforcement, I can tell you they will be the first to say that unpredictable domestic calls just come with the job. For our advocates, we think that's too humble. We also think that lately it's come with too a high of a price, for both officers and clients. As we shared with you last week, nearly 40 percent of the 346 homicides that have transpired within the past 10 years are domestic violence related. Officers who show up ready for anything are not just doing their jobs. They're providing life-saving referrals to clients who avoid potentially fatal situations because of their trauma-informed approach. These partnerships honestly are priceless.

Amorelle Upton, a past client served by the Rape & Abuse Crisis Center in Fargo understands this firsthand. She has become a remarkable advocate and ambassador for our work. You can learn more about her lived experience in her written testimony, which is also attached to this bill hearing. To share more about why these partnerships are so important to those we serve, I'd like to yield the rest of my time to two of my most respected colleagues: Sheriff Andy Schneider and Lt. Jeremy Moe, Grand Forks Police.

Sincerely,

*Coiya T. Inman*

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Legislative Chair/Coalition Member Program

CC: Seth O'Neill, Executive Director, North Dakota Domestic & Sexual Violence Coalition

