



CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS OF NORTH DAKOTA

House Human Services Committee
Testimony In Support of House Bill #1035
1-8-24

Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Human Services Committee,

My name is Greg Kasowski, Director of the Children's Advocacy Centers of North Dakota. I am here in support of House Bill 1035.

Each year across North Dakota, Children's Advocacy Centers provide direct services to more than 3,000 victims of child sexual abuse, child physical abuse, and other forms of child maltreatment. At each of our 11 locations, we function as a **centralized hub for child abuse cases** where our partners in law enforcement, human services, prosecution, medical, mental health, and victim advocacy all work collaboratively to help victims of child abuse.

The social work licensure compact offers many benefits to our state. A primary benefit for our Children's Advocacy Centers will be our ability to **increase access to and continuity of mental health care for our clients**, ultimately improving the mental well-being of children.

Many of the children we serve come from split homes; and oftentimes parents reside in different states. When the school year concludes for kids in the month of May, it's not uncommon for them to live with a caregiver temporarily in another state. Thus, while in the middle of working through their horrific trauma, these children move to a different location and may not be able to find services for a variety of reasons (e.g., long wait lists). Furthermore, the child is deprived of the established rapport and trust they have with their North Dakota clinician. This leads to increased stress, difficulty sleeping or eating, and behavioral problems.

Summer break is not the only time this continuity of service is interrupted. Since more than 90% of child sexual abuse cases are perpetrated by someone the child knows and trusts, families are often compelled to relocate for safety or to just get away from the place where the abuse happened.

The social work licensure compact would allow our licensed social workers to provide continuity of care through tele mental health services while the child is in another state that is part of the compact.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify today, and I am happy to try and answer any of your questions.

Sincerely,

Greg Kasowski
Executive Director

Children's Advocacy Centers of North Dakota

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