



NORTH DAKOTA

Family Alliance LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Testimony Supporting House Bill 1361

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Good morning, Chairman Klemin and honorable members of the House Judiciary Committee. My name is Jacob Thomsen, and I am a Policy Analyst with North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action. I am testifying on behalf of our organization in support of House Bill 1361 and respectfully request that you render a “DO PASS” on this bill.

Our organization believes that every person has inherent worth, and dignity given from God. Human trafficking, in its various forms, steals that worth and dignity away from the people who are victims of it. A person becomes dehumanized and is turned into a product, rather than a soul with worth, capability, and potential. They deserve to be loved. That feeling of love gets ripped away when people are bought and sold like a commodity.

This bill targets traffickers in our state and sends the message that the citizens of North Dakota are committed to making sure that those who commit abhorrent crimes such as this face significant penalties. This bill sends the message that North Dakota will not tolerate exploitation and slavery.

According to statistics from the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force, from 2016 to 2022, there were 700 victims of human trafficking that were served by the task force¹. That averages out to about 117 victims per year. These victims deserve justice, and this bill delivers it firmly.

This bill is also timely. In talking with The Lifeguard Group, an organization out of Montana that also does work in Western North Dakota, we were told that the Bakken oil boom found sex traffickers leaving Las Vegas to come to North Dakota because business was better here. With President Trump taking office, there is a great chance that the oil business in our state will expand once again, and the sex trafficking industry won't be too far behind it.

We believe that we are in the perfect time and place as a state to pass this bill into law and let the sex trafficking industry know that they are not welcome here and that they will be met with heavy penalties if it happens.

¹ Schwartz, E. (2023, January 25). *Testimony to the North Dakota State Assembly: Senate Appropriations Committee, Government*. North Dakota Legislative Assembly. https://ndlegis.gov/assembly/68-2023/testimony/SAPPGOV-2003-20230125-16496-F-SCHWARTZ_EMILY.pdf

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North Dakota needs to be a state that is tough on human traffickers for the sake of its most vulnerable citizens. We cannot be a state that lets human trafficking go unnoticed. For these reasons, North Dakota Family Alliance Legislative Action requests that you vote "DO PASS" on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I will stand for any questions.