

March 18, 2025

Senator Dick Dever
North Dakota State Legislature
Senate Appropriations Committee, Human Resources Division
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Chairman Dever and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

Law enforcement agencies across the state collaborate almost daily with domestic violence and sexual assault agencies in our local communities. These collaborative relationships have grown significantly throughout the past 40 plus years, with law enforcement agencies and domestic violence/sexual assault organizations working closely together for the safety of citizens and their children, while holding individuals responsible for these crimes accountable.

Our organizations work together for mutual benefit by providing shared training to staff, attending collaborative meetings, tracking criminal justice data, and making criminal justice system improvements on an ongoing basis.

When a sexual assault is reported, many of our communities activate a Sexual Assault Response Team. These multidisciplinary teams include members from law enforcement, medical professionals and advocates, responding together to ensure that victims of this invasive crime repeat the accounts of their experience the least number of times possible. This coordination ensures that evidence is collected, the chain of custody is followed, and evidence is preserved for prosecution, all while providing a trauma-informed response that gives victims the support they need.

In cases of domestic violence, officers respond in the heat of the moment during times of elevated risk to themselves and victims and must make decisions that protect the safety of all. Several communities participate in the Lethality Assessment Program, connecting victims of violence with a domestic violence advocate at the time of the incident, increasing awareness of safety services available to them while decreasing the likelihood that they will be killed during a future incident.

Law enforcement also supports the work of domestic violence and sexual assault organizations by responding to requests for welfare checks, providing police escorts in high danger situations, responding to security threats at shelters and offices when needed, serving and enforcing protection orders and much more. Related, our organizations count on the services of these agencies to provide safety, support, and guidance after our officers and deputies leave the scene. Through long-term support provided by domestic violence and sexual assault organizations, these complex patterns can be interrupted. The risk to victims and communities can be lessened through successful investigation, prosecution and ultimately rehabilitation for those who use violence.

The below undersigned fully support increased funding for the critical services provided by domestic violence and sexual assault agencies in our state.



Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Anderson, Chief, Wahpeton Police Department
Corey Bristol, Sheriff, Mountrail County Sheriff's Office
Joe Cianni, Chief, Dickinson Police Department
Dave Draovitch, Chief, Bismarck Police Department
Jason Freedman, Chief, Grand Forks Police Department
Steve Gutknecht, Interim Chief, Williston Police Department
Jesse Jahner, Sheriff, Cass County Sheriff's Office
Matthew Johansen, Sheriff, McKenzie County Sheriff's Office
Ron Jurgens, Sheriff, Walsh County Sheriff's Office
Verlan Kvande, Sheriff, Williams County Sheriff's Office
Bryan Lang, Sheriff, Ramsey County Sheriff's Office
Kelly Leben, Sheriff, Burleigh County Sheriff's Office
Corey Lee, Sheriff, Stark County Sheriff's Office
Kevin Litten, Chief, Stanley Police Department
Pete Nielsen, Chief, West Fargo Police Department
Jon Oien, Chief, Lisbon Police Department
Jeff Osvold, Chief, Cavalier Police Department
Dale Plessas, Interim Chief, Minot Police Department
Gary Ruhl, Sheriff, Richland County Sheriff's Office
Andy Schneider, Sheriff, Grand Forks County Sheriff's Office
Kurt Schwind, Sheriff, Nelson County Sheriff's Office
Jason Toso, Chief, Devils Lake Police Department
Nick Throntveit, Sheriff, Burke County Sheriff's Office
Jesse Wellen, Chief, Watford City Police Department
Matthew Wright, Sheriff, Cavalier County Sheriff's Office
David Zibolski, Chief, Fargo Police Department

CC: Seth O'Neill, Executive Director, North Dakota Domestic & Sexual Violence Coalition and
Coiya Tompkins Inman, Chair, Coalition Legislative Committee and President/CEO,
Community Violence Intervention Center (a coalition member program)

