

Testimony Prepared for the  
**The North Dakota Senate Human Services**  
**Senate Bill 2173 Relating to the definition of a children's advocacy center**  
**and the confidentiality of communications and records possession of a**  
**children's advocacy center**  
January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
By: Chelsea Flory, Burleigh County Human Service Zone Director

Chair Lee, and members of the North Dakota Senate Human Services Committee, my name is Cheslea Flory, and I serve as the Director for the Burleigh County Human Service Zone, which includes the county of Burleigh. Additionally, I am a member of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. I am here today to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 2173 relating to the definition of a children's advocacy center and the confidentiality of communications and records possession of a children's advocacy center (CAC).

Human Service Zones are mandated to provide child welfare services to include child protection services (CPS), foster care, in home case management and handling Children in Need of Services (CHINS) referrals for the state of North Dakota. As authorized agents of the Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), we are tasked with assessing reports of alleged abuse or neglect to determine whether maltreatment occurred. When reports of maltreatment involve potential criminal activity, we collaborate closely with law enforcement agencies, who investigate the criminal aspects of these cases. In such instances, law enforcement and Human Service Zones may determine if services from the children's advocacy center, such as forensic interviews and medical exams, are necessary to compile comprehensive records. These records support the facts and findings of both the CPS assessment and law enforcement

investigation. CAC's are not involved on all CPS cases and utilization of services, and capacities varies throughout the state. However, CAC's are a valuable resource for cases that meet criteria for their involvement and when there is a criminal investigation.

SB 2173 and the proposed amendments would enhance communication between CACs and human service zones (as the department's authorized agent) amongst other key partners. This allows for discussion regarding the services received, better service delivery and multi-disciplinary team collaboration to best address the safety and service needs of the family. This collaboration is critical to ensuring accurate and timely assessment, as well as ongoing service delivery for children that Human Service Zones may be legal ordered care, custody and control.

The North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association supports the passage of this bill and thanks you for your time and consideration; I stand for questions from the committee.