

**Support SB 2387**  
**North Dakota Senate Human Services Committee**

February 4, 2025

Chair Lee and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, my name is Kristie Wolff, I am the Communications Coordinator for Central Dakota Forensic Nurse Examiners (CDFNE).

I am providing testimony today in support of SB 2387 with amendments.

CDFNE is a North Dakota based non-profit organization providing forensic medical services to children and adult survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence, physical abuse and neglect in western North Dakota. Our organization serves 23 counties, with our headquarters in Bismarck. Our team of 23 Forensic Nurses work with a variety of partners to ensure that victims receive comprehensive, coordinated care while supporting the investigation and prosecution of crimes.

Survivors of sexual violence can face significant emotional, physical, and psychological challenges after an assault. Expanding rights for survivors in state law is not just a procedural formality; it is foundational to building trust, and ensuring that survivors feel safe, heard, and respected as they seek justice and healing.

We support the rights outlined in this bill; however, we believe amendments are necessary to ensure the most effective protections for survivors. These recommendations were developed through collaboration between myself, colleagues from the state's Children's Advocacy Centers, and the ND Domestic & Sexual Violence Coalition, along with consultations with multiple ND agencies who provide services to victims, and RISE, the organization requesting this bill. I would like to provide a more detailed explanation of each requested change.

**Section 1.a.**

We request changing the word "employee" to "victim advocate" so that only victim advocates would be allowed to consult during a forensic medical examination. This is important because victim

advocates are specially trained to provide crucial emotional support, guidance, and resources, helping survivors navigate the complex medical, legal, and emotional aftermath of sexual assault with compassion and empowerment.

We also request including victim advocates from Children's Advocacy Centers in the definition of a sexual assault victim advocate. These specially trained advocates are a vital part of the team when working with survivors of child sexual abuse.

**Section 1. b.**

We request removing the back half of the definition of a sexual violence survivor beginning with the words "and, if the survivor is incompetent or deceased."

The broad range of the individuals listed could allow multitude of people to access information about a highly personal and sensitive matter. We believe that other legal provisions, such as guardianship or the designation of a legally authorized executor or administrator, can address access to this information while better safeguarding the survivor's privacy.

**Section 2. a.**

The use of both terms, "medical" and "physical," in this section seems confusing and redundant. We request replacing them with the phrase "forensic medical examination," as it is used in section 12.1-34-07.

**Section 2. b. (1)**

We request the removal of the entire item, "counsel is not available in a timely manner, or" as victims are not required to speak with or report to law enforcement to access other services. Victims have the right to choose when they speak with law enforcement which gives them time to retain private counsel if they choose.

**Section 2. b. (2)**

We recommend rewording this section to eliminate redundancy with repeated use of the words "law enforcement."

**Section 2. d.**

We request the word “domestic” be changed to “sexual” to align with the definition in 1a and stay consistent with the focus of the bill.

**Section 2. d. (1) and 2. d. (2)**

Staying consistent with the changes in 2. a., we request replacing the terms “medical” and “physical,” with the phrase “forensic medical examination,” in both sections as it is used in section 12.1-34-07.

**Section 2. d. (3)**

We request replacing the term “domestic violence” with “sexual assault” to align with the definition in 1a and stay consistent with the focus of the bill.

We also request removing the term “victim advocates” as that information and service would be provided through sexual assault organizations.

Lastly, we request removing the term “and other resources” as it is very vague and not well defined. In addition, each individual case is unique, and the spectrum of information survivors need could likely fill a binder.

That concludes the requested changes.

In closing, when state law prioritizes survivor-centered practices, it sends a powerful message that justice and healing is accessible, inspiring greater confidence in the system.

Today I am asking you to give a DO PASS recommendation on SB 2387 with the requested amendments.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

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