

Testimony Prepared for the **Senate Judiciary Committee**
February 17, 2025
Kim Jacobson, Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director

HB 1030: Related to Treatment Courts

Chair Larson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Kim Jacobson. I serve as the Director of Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone, which includes the counties of Traill and Steele, and as the President of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. I am here today to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1030.

Shifting the language in North Dakota Century Code from “drug court” to “treatment court” supports our communities by taking an important step toward destigmatizing substance abuse. It demonstrates an understanding of substance abuse as a treatable health issue, and it emphasizes the restorative goals of North Dakota’s treatment court programs.

Human service zones frequently work alongside individuals who experience or are impacted by alcohol and substance use disorders, so we have witnessed and contributed to the success of recovery and reintegration services in North Dakota. For example, zones partner with the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR) to support the successful reentry of incarcerated individuals, including those who are incarcerated for drug-related offenses. When possible, we place eligibility workers onsite at correctional facilities to educate inmates about economic assistance programs and support them during the application process. These outreach efforts help ensure that returning citizens have immediate access to economic assistance benefits and continuity of care, which supports lower recidivism rates.

Zones also manage child welfare cases, and zone directors are the legal custodians of children in the public foster care system. When these cases involve alcohol or substance abuse, zones often play a role in addiction recovery. Zone support is tailored to the needs of the individuals we serve, but it may include collaboration with treatment providers to identify relapse triggers or develop safe care plans for children. It may also include service referrals, coordination with probation programs, psychiatric and substance use evaluations, and various forms of economic assistance.

Our experience serving populations affected by addiction has taught us that accurate, destigmatizing language — such as that proposed by HB 1030 — is a critical driver of individual stability, family reunification, and recovery. I respectfully request a “Do Pass” vote on HB 1030. Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. I stand for questions from the committee.