Testimony Prepared for the
House Human Services Committee
March 14, 2023
By: Kim Jacobson, Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director

RE: Senate Bill 2335 – Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Training and Screening

Chair Weisz and members of the House Human Service Committee, my name is Kim Jacobson. I am the Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director, which includes the service area of Traill and Steele Counties. In addition, I serve as President of the North Dakota Human Service Zone Director Association. Please consider my testimony in support of SB 2335.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) is a condition that significantly impacts the development, behavior, and ability to learn of those who are impacted. Early detection, care, and treatment of those with FASD is known to result in better outcomes. As child welfare professionals, it is critical for our workforce to understand, refer, and support children that present with FASD symptoms. I support FASD-related training for new child welfare workers as well as ongoing training for child welfare workers and supervisors. However, I am uncertain if this training requirement needs to be in law. Rather, I suggest that the Department include this training requirement in Administrative Rule.

Furthermore, I support the addition of FASD screening during Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) program, which is commonly referred to as Health Tracks. This is a preventative health care program for newborns, children, and young adults through age 20 that are on Medicaid. In addition, all children who enter foster care are required to have a Health Tracks screening within the first 30 days in foster care and annually thereafter. Adding the FASD screen to the Health Tracks program would add an additional

safety net measure to ensure efforts for early detection and referral. Of note, the committee may want to consider linking this requirement to the health section of code to ensure clear communications of expectations.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony. I stand for questions from the committee.