

Gabriella Thomas
1037 2nd Ave NW
Hazen, ND 58545
District 33

Testimony In Support SB 2022

Thank you, Chairman Klemin, and members of the House Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2202. My name is Gabriella Thomas from District 33, Hazen, North Dakota. I am a nursing student at Bismarck State College and a survivor of domestic violence.

Passing SB 2022 will support men, women, and children in their pursuit of justice against their abusers. This bill will offer survivors the medical assistance needed to deal with their experiences. While collecting time-sensitive objective data in accordance with the chain of evidence.

On December 14, 2019, I made a decision that would not only affect my life but the lives of my children. My husband, at the time, was coming down from a combination of Adderall and vodka when the incident occurred. The acts of violence towards me had been escalating for months and my solution had always been to take myself and my children to my mothers. However, during this altercation, my husband took my vehicle's keys and cell phone while trying to escape and call 911. He then barricaded me in our bedroom while screaming profanities at me. My 5-year-old child followed us and tried to get between my husband and me. This turned his anger toward her. I told her to run to her room and shut her door while turning his attention back to me. He strangled me on our bed. While fighting back he pinned my arms to my side while yelling profanities in my face. Once he left and began yelling for me to follow and fix the window, I made him break and I made the decision to run.

I went out the back door of our trailer house and ran with no coat or shoes to our neighbors to call 911. After the police officer removed my husband he handed me a piece of paper on which to write my statement and went to get back into his patrol car. While talking to my mother she pointed out that I had a bite mark on my right lateral forearm that was already bruised and bleeding. The wound did not hurt and I was surprised to see it, at that moment all I felt was numb and cold. I went outside and flagged

the officer to take a picture of the injury. He pulled out a small digital camera and took a picture of the injury through his vehicle window.

The next day I felt moderate pain in my neck, shoulders, and arms, and spear grass was embedded into my feet. When going to put on a necklace I discovered I had bilateral fingertip bruises on my biceps and that my neck was swollen to the point I could not put on my necklace. I went to the nearest hospital and had fellow medical colleagues take pictures of the injuries for documentation.

The following day I was able to gain a 5-year protection order solely due to a compassionate judge who read my written testimony regarding the altercation on December 14, 2019. The picture the patrol officer took of the bite mark never made it to evidence. The pictures taken at the hospital could not be submitted to the court because I did not make a formal visit and the police were not notified. Without the help and support of WIC and a judge willing to listen to my story, I would never have been able to obtain a protection order. Survivors of domestic violence should not have to rely on good fortune to achieve justice and safety from their abusers.

Thank you, Chairman, and members of the Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2202.