



March 10, 2023

Sen. Judy Lee, Chairwoman
Senate Human Services Committee
North Dakota Legislature
600 Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Chairman Lee,

My name is Coiya Tompkins, and I serve as president/CEO of the Community Violence Intervention Center in Grand Forks. I'm writing in opposition of House Bill 1256.

With a holistic approach to ending interpersonal violence in two generations, our agency serves more than 3,300 domestic violence and sexual assault clients, and educates nearly 10,000 professionals and students each year. Our agency also provides supervised visitation and exchange services for hundreds of families each year, and works with the state's attorney's office to support nearly 1,400 victims of crime each year. We also provide domestic violence intervention programming on an annual basis and last year, we served nearly 200 individuals who were court ordered to participate in our multi-week educational course for those who use violence.

Our staff work with victims of sexual assault and domestic violence on a daily basis, many of whom avoid seeking help from us initially because they are afraid they won't be believed. We're gravely concerned this bill could create even greater challenges for those who are legitimately assaulted or harassed. If an individual who experienced legitimate sexual harassment is unable to substantiate their claim with outside evidence, as is often the case with sexual assault and harassment, it is possible they could be charged with this crime even though they are a victim of sexual harassment. With sexual assault, already being one of the most underreported crimes, creating additional barriers for reporting is a major concern.

This bill is also unnecessary because making false statements is already a Class A Misdemeanor under North Dakota Century Code 12.1-11-02. Creating an additional section for false statements of sexual harassment is unnecessary. Also, enhancing the penalty for a false statement of sexual harassment to a Class C Felony, punishable by up to five years in prison and/or a \$10,000 fine is inappropriate.

I urge you to vote "do not pass" on HB1256.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Coiya M. Tompkins'.

Coiya M. Tompkins
President/CEO
Community Violence Intervention Center