

Testimony Prepared for the  
**House Human Services Committee**

January 5, 2021

By: Kim Jacobson, Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone Director

**RE: House Bill 1076 – Children’s Cabinet Governness**

Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Service Committee, my name is Kim Jacobson. I serve as the Director of Agassiz Valley Human Service Zone which includes the service area of Traill and Steele Counties. In addition, I am a current member of the North Dakota Children’s Cabinet appointed by Governor Burgum as a community representative. . Please consider my testimony in support of House Bill 1076.

The Children’s Cabinet was enacted during the 66<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. The purpose of the cabinet is to *“assess, guide, and coordinate the care of children across the state’s branches of government and the tribal nations.”* This is unique and purpose-filled cabinet focusing on broad scale children’s issues, systems, programs, and policy. Under this capacity, we work together to listen, learn, ask questions, study, and recommend how to best provide comprehensive services and supports to children and their families.

During the recent interim, the inaugural Children’s Cabinet was selected and organized. As a newly formed cabinet, we have been becoming acquainted with our role, defining our work plan, and begun to learn together during our quarterly meetings. There remains much important work to be done. The changes offered by SB 1076, provide technical clarifications to existing language, and helps to support the future role and effectiveness of the Children’s Cabinet.

I support the technical correction to the overall timeline for the Children's Cabinet. The vision and intent of the cabinet was not for a few years' initiative, but rather meaningful and ongoing way to improve communications, oversight, visioning, and planning with a specialty focus of children's issues. I also support the flexibility proposed in Children's Cabinet Chair assignment. Appointment discretion is critical to support a well-fitted legislatively appointed cabinet chair to lead the cabinet.

For your consideration, I offer one additional item for your consideration and improvement to existing law. During the 66<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, two different groups were formed that have relationship to each other. This includes the Children's Cabinet and the Commission on Juvenile Justice. The Commission on Juvenile Justice is detailed in NDCC 50-06-43.2 and requires oversight and report to the Children's Cabinet. However, the language in NDCC 50-06-43.1 does not clearly state this duty and responsibility.

It is important that roles and scope of duty be clear so that both groups understand relationships and roles. To remedy, NDCC 50-06-43.1 may be amended to contain complimentary language respective to the role and scope of duty of the Children's Cabinet with the Commission on Juvenile Justice as provided for in NDCC 50-06-43.2.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1076. I am available to the committee for any questions or follow-up.