

Testimony in support of HB 1003

Senate Appropriations Committee

Emily Schwartz, Director, North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force

March 5, 2021

Chairman Holmberg and Members of the Committee:

I come before you today, along with several of my colleagues, to highlight the work that has gone on in North Dakota to fight human trafficking in the last biennium, to provide a summary of how funds appropriated in the 2019 Legislative Session were utilized, and to urge this committee to recommend a “do pass” on HB 1003, which will continue funding for anti-trafficking work in North Dakota. Attached to this summary you will find a description of the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force’s work in the state, statistics on victim services and investigations data, and a map illustrating the communities in North Dakota where victims were located and/or where trafficking cases are known to have occurred. The problem is statewide, and affects tribal, rural and urban areas. The data we have collected over the last three biennia shows us that human trafficking continues to be a significant problem in North Dakota. The State’s financial support has been absolutely critical to the success that victim service organizations and law enforcement have had in building a coordinated, effective response and in collecting data to support our work. We therefore ask that you recommend a do pass on HB 1003, allowing this important work to continue.

Some background information on the utilization of funds appropriated in the 2019 biennium follows:

- HB 1003 is the only appropriation in the state’s budget that specifically addresses victim services to human trafficking victims.

- Human Trafficking services were funded at \$1.4 million in the 2019 session, \$825,000 in the 2017 session, and at \$1.25M in 2015.
- The Attorney General’s Drug and Violent Crime Policy Board distributed funds. The AG’s Office created an application and held hearings with the Board, granting money to nine organizations.
 - Agencies receiving funding include Youthworks, CAWS North Dakota, AARC, CVIC, DVRCC, YWCA, LSND, FCS, and RACC. The funding predominantly supports direct services to exploited and trafficked individuals located in their local communities. This includes:
 - Staff positions, specialized services, and supplies for victim survivors. This includes legal services, shelter, regional case managers and advocates, Navigators, Labor Trafficking Specialists, NDHTTF Director and Grant Tech contracts, training and travel support, and contracts with survivor leader advisors who can best inform the work done in the state.
 - A Human Trafficking Fund created to support victim survivors throughout their healing, including at point of first contact. The fund supports emergency supplies throughout their recovery including medical, mental health, transitional housing, job training, and housing needs. Any organization in the state serving a survivor can request funding by submitting a reimbursement request form. Any request over \$250.00 goes through review by a multidisciplinary team for approval prior to being submitted to the Attorney General’s Office for approval.

- The funding also supports the Demand Reduction Program which is an intermediate sentencing, diversion and education option for those charged with misdemeanor prostitution or human trafficking. This program educates participants on the impact of prostitution and sex trafficking on communities, survivors, spouses, and children.
- The funding is only available on a reimbursement basis. Organizations are required to provide documentation, receipts, and activity logs for employees, and the submitted costs are evaluated by the Attorney General's Office for allowability before they are reimbursed with state funds.
- The AG's office has reached out to grantees to ensure that money is obligated and will be spent within allotted timeframe. Reallocations have been made to move funds between grantees from those who indicated they would not be able to spend their funding to the grantees that indicated they needed additional funding.
- State funds were utilized as match funding for federal grants. The NDHTTF will be reapplying in coming months for the Enhanced Collaborative Model task force grant through the Department of Justice, a current key source of funding, and exploring additional federal grant opportunities.
 - State dollars are critical to getting federal funds as almost all programs have 25% match requirement.
 - Federal grants often have different guidelines than state grants and state human trafficking funds are used to cover costs that are unallowable through federal funds.
 - Significant delays in releasing the awarded federal funds have occurred. Without the state funds, employees would have had to be furloughed or laid off.

- I'd like to highlight some key data points found in the supporting documents I've submitted today for testimony:
 - To date, the NDHTTF has served 535 exploited and trafficked individuals in the state.
 - Youth comprise 28% of our caseload, and adults 72%.
 - Sex trafficking is 84% of the caseload, labor trafficking 6%, sex and labor 9%, and other 1%.
 - The NDHTTF Operational Team has assisted in 3,366 instances of technical assistance requests.
 - 170 investigations into trafficking have been conducted.
 - 90% of investigations are for sex trafficking, 7% are labor trafficking, and sex and labor is 3%.
 - The number of individuals trained statewide is 14,151.
 - 80% of victims served were North Dakota residents.
- I'd like to close with a story of a client that was recently assisted as a result of the funds we are discussing today, as relayed by her human trafficking advocate at the YWCA shelter:
 - A human trafficking survivor was referred to the YWCA through a referral from the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force (NDHTTF). She shared that she was trafficked by a family member and was being held against her will at a local hotel. After being at the hotel for approximately seven days, hotel staff noted the activity in and out of the hotel room and spoke with the client. Hotel staff limited

her to two visitors per day. The client realized that hotel staff knew what was happening and cared. This interaction with hotel staff led to the client knowing that if she did not reach out for help, the trafficker would move her to another hotel. The client called the human trafficking hotline that connected her to the NDHTTF. The NDHTTF contact arranged for placement at the YWCA and provided safe a transportation from the hotel to the YWCA shelter. During the stay at the YWCA, the human trafficking advocate was able to arrange for medical care, free of charge through a partnership with YWCA and Sanford medical residency doctors. The client did not feel safe in her current location and identified family in another state willing to take her into their home until the she is able to find a job and establish safe housing. The YWCA human trafficking advocate used funding through the NDHTTF Human Trafficking Fund to purchase transportation to get the client to family and safety. The client stayed nine days at the YWCA before being relocated to safety with family members.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to share the important work of the North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force with you. I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.



535
Number of Human
Trafficking Victims
Served in
North Dakota

Youth: 28%
Adults: 72%
Sex: 84%
Labor: 6%
Sex & Labor: 9%
Other 1%

170
Number of
Investigations

Sex: 90%
Labor: 7%
Sex & Labor: 3%

14,151
Number of
Individuals
Trained
Statewide

3,366
Number of Technical
Assistance Calls
to NDHTTF
Operational Team

Data provided: January 1st, 2016 through December 31st, 2020

results of ndhttf work

- The NDHTTF operates nine multi-disciplinary teams (MDTS) to provide local response to exploited and trafficked individuals. Locations include Williston, Watford City, Dickinson, Minot, Bismarck, Devils Lake/Spirit Lake, Jamestown, Grand Forks, and Fargo.
- The NDHTTF hosts a human trafficking fund that provides short and long-term resources to any victim in the state. The most requested services are for housing, behavioral health, medical/dental, legal assistance, basic needs and transportation.
- Training has yielded better, more accurate identification of suspected and confirmed labor and sex trafficking victims by law enforcement, community providers, and the public. Training includes best practices when working with victims and how to successfully investigate trafficking.
- Service providers and law enforcement have demonstrated continued commitment to survivors. Ongoing access to services is critical as approximately 80% of victims served are North Dakota residents.

Who We Are

The North Dakota Human Trafficking Task Force (NDHTTF) is a collaborative team made up of law enforcement, prosecution, and service providers at federal, state, and local levels.

What We Do

We are a team that responds to victims of sex and labor trafficking; providing comprehensive services, investigating traffickers and solicitors, and prosecuting offenders. The NDHTTF is the nexus for a network of law enforcement and service providers to work in tandem to build capacity and combat trafficking statewide.

When We Started

Since 2015, the Attorney General and the Human Trafficking Commission have been working closely with the NDHTTF to build a coordinated response to human trafficking in the state.

Where We Serve

NDHTTF serves the entire state of North Dakota.

Why We Exist

NDHTTF exists to prevent, detect, disrupt, and dismantle human trafficking.

How We Do It

- Train communities to identify exploitation and trafficking and provide points of contact
- Train local multidisciplinary teams to respond to victims and investigate trafficking-related crime
- Assist response agencies and communities with the development of response protocol
- Provide technical assistance to local response teams upon request
- Run operations and investigate trafficking related crime
- Prosecute offenders and provide victims with restitution
- Engagement in national anti-trafficking best practices and sharing of resources
- Build networks for victims to access services and resources



NORTH DAKOTA HUMAN TRAFFICKING MDT & TRAFFICKING CASES MAP

