

**House Human Services Committee
SB 2383
March 9, 2005**

Good morning Chairman Price and members of the House Human Services Committee. My name is Gladys Cairns and I serve as the administrator for child protection in the Children and Family Services Division of the Department of Human Services.

I am here today to support the recognition of Children's Advocacy Centers by the provision of the amendment to the definitions in the child abuse and neglect law and the addition of the Children's Advocacy Centers to the confidentiality section of the our law.

Since 1976 North Dakota's law for child abuse has included the recognition of Multi-disciplinary teams. Every county in our state has access to a dispositional team. In many ways North Dakota has been ahead of other states in the coordination of assessments/investigations. Years ago the legislature required the coordination between child protection services and law enforcement officials in response to suspected child sexual abuse and serious physical abuse. We have recognized the need for medical exams to be completed by medical professionals who have been trained specially for those exams and have provided opportunities for physicians to receive training. Children's Advocacy Centers are the next step in the provision of quality child protection services.

The Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) are endorsed as the "state of the art" intervention for effective, sensitive assessment/investigation of allegations of child maltreatment with emphasis on safety for children and fairness to the accused.

The Department of Human Services supports SB 2383 and asks for your favorable vote.

Others are here to provide you with information on Children's Advocacy Centers but I would be please to answer questions. Thank you!