

Testimony
House Bill 1230 – Department of Human Services
Senate Judiciary Committee
Senator Nething, Chairman
March 9, 2011

Senator Nething and members of the committee, I am Susan Wagner, LSW, Human Services Program Administrator, with the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, for the Department of Human Services (DHS).

On behalf of the Department, I am here to provide testimony in support of HB 1230.

I would like to take this opportunity to first provide some background information about the relevance of this bill in relation to treatment services and the management of sex offenders in North Dakota. As program administrator, I oversee a contract with Counseling and Psychotherapy Centers, Inc. (CPC) for the provision of community-based treatment for high risk sex offenders and sex offenders against adults. The provision of sex offender treatment services is based on a victim-centered containment model which emphasizes the importance of supervision and treatment as the most effective method of managing sex offenders in communities. Through this contract, sex offender treatment services are offered in six communities: Bismarck, Mandan, Jamestown, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot. Offenders from other communities are provided the services as well but they have to travel to the nearest community where services are actually provided. A containment team has been developed in each community to oversee the management of

the offenders. The sex offender specialist probation officer, CPC clinician, polygraph examiner, and victim witness advocate comprise each team. The team meetings are facilitated by the Senior Area Coordinator for CPC. Each team member has a specific role in the team as well as the overall management of sex offenders. Of relevance to this bill, is the role of the victim witness advocate. The advocate's role on the team and in the overall management of sex offenders is to represent the voice of individuals who have been victimized by those offenders involved in the treatment program and to assist the team with effective strategies for the management of offenders from the perspective of individuals who have been victimized. Advocates also assist the team with the review of various assignments the offenders complete throughout the treatment process. The most vital aspect of their role is to provide advocacy and support services to those individuals who were victimized. In order to reach out to those individuals to offer services, they need current address information. The passing of HB 1230 would provide the advocates with the most current address information from the various entities noted in the bill and most importantly, individuals who have been victimized would be better informed of their choice for services.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee might have. Thank you.