

**Testimony**  
**Senate Bill Number 2131**  
**Senate Human Services Committee**  
**Senator Judy Lee, Chairman**  
**January 20th, 2021**

Chairman Lee, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Cory Pedersen, Director of the Children and Family Services Division with the Department of Human Services (Department). I appear before you to support Senate Bill 2131.

Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) are vital partners to the Department, to Human Service Zones, and to law enforcement in effectively addressing child abuse and neglect in North Dakota, particularly in cases of child sexual abuse and child physical abuse. Without Children's Advocacy Centers, prosecutions for criminal acts against children would be much less likely to occur and much less likely to result in conviction of those who offend against children. The multidisciplinary approach, forensic interviewing expertise, treatment services, and prevention efforts of the Children's Advocacy Centers are vital to the investigative, administrative, and judicial systems that respond to child abuse cases in our state.

Quality, accredited Children's Advocacy Centers contribute to building strong stable families in the aftermath of child abuse and neglect. We all have a stake in maintaining the excellence of our Children's Advocacy Centers and strongly advocate for maintaining their quality services. One critical component of maintaining quality services and securing safety for the children and families coming to a Children's Advocacy Center, is assuring the quality of the staff and volunteers serving vulnerable children and families through fingerprint-based background checks.

The Department of Human Services supports Senate Bill 2131.

Thank you for your time and I will stand for any questions.