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"Restoring hope. Building futures. Changing lives."

House Bill No. 1402

Finance and Taxation Committee

Testimony presented by Michelle Erickson

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Chairman Headland and members of the Finance and Taxation Committee

Good Morning. My name is Michelle Erickson and I am the Executive Director of the Abused Adult Resource Center (AARC) in Bismarck. AARC is a nonprofit agency that offers services to domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking victims including but not limited to crisis intervention, emergency shelter, transitional housing, education and employment programming, and support groups. AARC serves a seven-county area in South Central North Dakota including Standing Rock Indian Reservation. We believe in a holistic approach of meeting our clients where they are and helping them achieve the goals they want to work towards. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB1402.

One of the programs we operate is Seeds of Hope Thrift and Gift Store located on Main Street and 6th Avenue in Bismarck. Seeds of Hope has been in operation for over 25 years and has grown to contribute to almost 30% of AARC's annual operating budget.

Seeds of Hope benefits the community in several ways. Anyone in the community that is financially burdened and searching for employment or starting a new job can call AARC and be referred to Seeds of Hope to pick out an outfit and shoes at no cost so they feel confident going to an interview or starting a new job. AARC also has an education and employment program for our clients and once they complete the classroom curriculum, they have the option of working at Seeds of Hope to gain retail experience. We also help our clients moving out of our shelters into their own homes furnish their new living spaces at no cost.

Over the last three years, AARC has paid **\$159,184.46** in sales tax. Approximately **\$95,000** of that is from used clothing sold at Seeds of Hope. \$95,000 or approximately \$30,000 yearly would benefit victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking greatly.

Because our store operates by reselling donated items that were previously purchased there is no need for it to be taxed AFTER it has been donated which in effect enables us to continue to assist with providing more services in our community to the people that need them.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard on this bill.

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