

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

August 19, 2015

Mark Greenberg
Acting Assistant Secretary
Administration for Children and Families
370 L'Enfant Promenade SW
Washington, DC 20447

Dear Assistant Secretary Greenberg -

We are writing to express our strong support for the grant proposal submitted by Mountain Plains Youth Services (Youthworks) that would look to implement a program focused on human trafficking prevention and intervention among the runaway and homeless youth and young adult population in North Dakota. North Dakota is experiencing rapid population growth as a result of the oil boom in western North Dakota. While the oil boom has certainly benefitted the state and its residents, the rapid population increase has contributed to a significant rise in homelessness, at-risk persons, and human trafficking throughout the state.

It has become an all too frequent occurrence in North Dakota to see news of another human trafficking arrest or anti-trafficking sting, with very little reporting on what ultimately happens to the victims. Service providers and law enforcement have struggled to meet the growing needs of trafficked individuals in the state in identification of victims, provision of services including housing, and education and training on prevention and working with victims.

Youthworks has been providing direct services in the state of North Dakota for almost thirty years, and is the largest organization in the state dedicated to serving the needs of runaway and homeless youth and young adults. Over the years Youthworks has continued to add to the services it provides for troubled youth and young adults, and with the increased concern about human trafficking in North Dakota they have been at the forefront of providing prevention and intervention services to at-risk youth and victims of human trafficking. North Dakota recently passed and has begun implementing new anti-human trafficking laws, including increased penalties for traffickers and purchasers as well as safe harbor and other provisions for victims. While we applaud the state for taking these steps, and for committing money to victims assistance programs, this grant is a critical part of our state being able to fully realize and deliver the necessary prevention, intervention, and recovery services for victims and those in danger of becoming victims.

North Dakota is in need of a comprehensive approach to dealing with victims of human trafficking. Youthworks' proposed project will move the state toward this goal by providing coordination, training and service in the areas where trafficking victims are most in need – and will work with existing referral partners to provide services out of the scope of their operations. The project will identify, license, and maintain a network of host homes to house trafficking victims in seven counties across North Dakota and Clay County, Minnesota. The project will also hire two Host Home Case Managers to identify and

assemble all local service providers and law enforcement agencies to assess available resources, provide training, identify gaps in resources and create a written response and referral protocol for victims.

Youthworks has a history of taking a comprehensive approach when dealing with troubled youth, including working with the families, schools, courts and other community based groups to provide the necessary level of services to address the issues at hand – and we are confident that they will do the same with this grant funding.

Sincerely,



Heidi Heitkamp
U.S. Senate



Kevin Cramer
U.S. House of Representatives