

FAIR HOUSING OF THE DAKOTAS

(The Fair Housing of the Dakotas serves North and South Dakota and works to eliminate housing discrimination and to ensure equal housing opportunities for all.)

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**Testimony before the
Senate Human Services Committee
on Senate Bill 2194
by the Fair Housing of the Dakotas
January 26, 2009**

Madam Chair, and members of the Committee, my name is Amy S. Nelson and I am the Executive Director of the Fair Housing of the Dakotas (FHD). The FHD is a non-profit agency which serves North and South Dakota. We work to eliminate housing discrimination and to ensure equal housing opportunities for all. The FHD educates the public on Fair Housing Laws and also investigates allegations of housing discrimination. The Federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in the rental, sale or financing of housing due to race, color, religion, national origin, gender (sex), presence of children (familial status) and disability (handicap). North Dakota state law also provides these protections as well as due to age (40 and over) and status with respect to marriage and public assistance.

The FHD receives a number of contacts from women regarding their housing situation. In addition to landlord/tenant law issues, these contacts also include issues of housing discrimination relating to sexual harassment by their housing providers, lease issues in domestic violence situations and denial of housing due to the presence of children in the home. Single mothers also tend to be the most common victims in the denial of housing due to receipt of Section 8 vouchers (receipt of public assistance). We have assisted a number of women in understanding their rights under fair housing laws and assisted them with that process. Housing discrimination is on the rise in North Dakota as our numbers reflect as well as those with the North Dakota Department of Labor. We very much support any efforts by the Commission on the Status of Women to address these issues and bring needed attention to them.

The Fair Housing of the Dakotas supports passage of Senate Bill 2194. I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and please let me know if you have any questions. Thank you.

