

Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking & Slavery
Board of Directors
August 8th, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Present: John Chesser, George Belitsos, Maggie Tinsman, Thomas Barr, Bernadette Rixner, Mike Tupper, Stephanie Olson, Linda Harrell

Excused Absence: Grace Lohse, Alyse Hardin, Deanna Jensen, Jessica Hagin,

Guests: Maddie Judas (Technology Consultant), Threase Harms (Advocacy Iowa), Shirley Reding (Emeritus Board member), Gretchen Brown-Waech (Attorney General's Office)

1. Call to Order and attendance; start recording (John)

Chesser called the meeting to order at 2:35.

2. Consent agenda items (John):

- **June meeting minutes (see "June NAHT Board Meeting Minutes")**
- **June treasurer's report (see "June 2023 Treasurer's Report")**

Chesser asked if there were any questions or concerns regarding the June Board meeting minutes. Tinsman had a question about the outcome of the Research Committee conversation with Andrea at the Family Crisis Center about giving stats on calls . Olson responded saying that they were brainstorming ways to discuss the importance of what is actually happening regarding human trafficking in our state. She also noted that statistics don't mean a lot to somebody who doesn't know the issue at hand regarding trafficking, but painting a picture (giving actual stories) of what the NAHT is doing to combat trafficking is very important to show awareness.

Belitsos asked when Chesser would complete the 2023 Human Trafficking statistics. Chesser noted that he will send the 2023 statistics by September so that Belitsos has them for the September blog post. Chesser made a motion to approve the June meeting minutes and Rixner seconded the motion. **The June meeting minutes were approved unanimously.**

Belitsos noted that there are two Treasurer's reports, one for June and one for July. He then noted that we received barely any donations for June and a lot of donations during the month of July. Belitsos noted that this was because of the movie, "Sound of Freedom" coming out and because of Belitsos' Facebook birthday donation event. Belitsos also mentioned that a lot more people have asked to be volunteers, and also

have subscribed to the NAHT blog post/newsletter. Tinsman noted that she did not receive the July Treasurer's report and asked if he could send it to her. Chesser responded saying that he would resend the treasurer's report because he might've forgotten to send it. Chesser made a motion to approve both the June and July Treasurer's report and Fineran seconded the motion. **The June and July Treasurer's reports were approved unanimously.**

3. Interim response to funding shortfall for victim services (along with interim HT study committee): proposal from Threase for interim lobbying effort; possible fundraising appeal to our newsletter subscribers (John, Threase)

Chesser noted that the Office of Victim Service's report was described as a crisis and that the Board didn't have a lot of time to talk about it in the previous meeting so we would be discussing it during this meeting. Chesser then noted that Harms would be going into more detail about the proposal for the Interim Study effort.

Harms first started the discussion with some background information on securing an additional 5 million for victim services. She then noted that she has been working diligently with the interim group for the last 18 months which she is hoping to continue and is also hoping to negotiate having a legislative study which will be discussed once the legislative council comes together in the next week or so. She noted that she has been in contact with legislative leaders who are committed to making sure that the Interim Study Committee is approved to move forward.

Harms then noted that she is aware of the financial issues that the eight survivor service non-profits are having and that service providers have expressed concerns about insufficient state fund, leading to potential service and staffing cuts. Harms emphasized the challenge of securing additional state funds and stressed the importance of the work that occurred during the interim study. Harms noted that in order to address these concerns, the NAHT needs to increase awareness, advocacy and grassroots support across the state, financial education efforts including media outreach, and legislative lobbying to secure funding.

Tinsman asked a question regarding adding sexual violence, homicide, and human trafficking to the letter asking for additional funding. Harms responded by stating that those service areas would be added to the state appropriations along with asking for additional funding in the letter to the legislative council. Tinsman then asked how the NAHT can convince policymakers to increase funding for victim services. Harms stated that on the second page of the letter, they have outlined some strategies that the NAHT

would explore. She stated that this includes meetings with the Attorney General's Office, Governor Reynolds and legislators and then discussing with those who manage the budget the different resources that the service providers needs and why these resources are needed.

Tinsman asked what the NAHT will be doing during the legislative interim that occurs July through December. Harms responded saying that this is when the NAHT would outline a specific work plan in order to obtain additional resources from the legislature. Tinsman asked if Harms could help draft the letter and then the network can sign it and send it to the Attorney General's Office. Harms responded stating that we need to try to meet with key legislators before the end of September because that is when budget requests are due so having a face-to-face meeting is the main goal right now.

Brown-Waech noted that John Gips, the victim service section chief has made a recommendation to the Attorney General that the code should be changed to have added the correct language. She also noted that Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault aslo do grassroots advocacy taining and have advocates from around the state and do a training on how to lobby. Brown-Waech stated that this would be something the NAHT looks into doing.

Fineran asked Harms if there are any other policymakers that she thinks the NAHT should meet with. Harms responded that she would give the NAHT a specific work plan with a list of target legislators that the NAHT should reach out to.

Belitsos noted that out of the eight agencies that solely provide service to survivors of human trafficking, only two of them are recieving funding from the Attorney General's Office. He noted that this should also be mentioned in the letter and that the NAHT should combine forces with the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence to askto add trafficking to the code and increasing the state budget for victim services

Bar asked if Harms knows of any other opportunities in which the NAHT could catch Iowa's legislators face-to-face. Harms responded saying it is hard to know where they will be at day-to-day but that if anybody is aware or knows legislators, the best thing to do is contact them about this.

Harms noted that legislators know that human trafficking is occurring in the state, but that they just do not understand what is and isn't happening and it is our job to tell them that we have survivor service providers that are receiving no resources and how these resources are detrimental to combating trafficking. She mentioned that the NAHT needs

to make sure legislators are aware that the NAHT is looking at effective, proven strategies to combat trafficking. (Belitsos had to depart the meeting).

Chesser mentioned that he would like to make a motion today to use the funds that Belitsos generously designated to the NAHT for operating support and move it to the contract support for Advocacy Iowa to receive more funding and resources from them.

Harms noted that Advocacy Iowa will separately bill for education/advocacy work and then specifically bill separately for legislative lobbying work to make sure to not hit the 20% of the budget since that would violate the conditions of the NAHT nonprofit status. Harms then noted that the legislative council is expected to meet before the end of August and once she knows a set date, she will let the NAHT know.

Chesser made a motion to budget \$10,000 for Advocacy Strategy's contract for 2024. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

4. Research Committee Update (Stephanie)

Olson noted that the research committee has been discussing partnering and collaborating with organizations outside of human trafficking including domestic violence and other crossover organizations that are possible funders. Olson noted that we need to broaden the organizations that we collaborate with in order to get more funding. Olson mentioned that she has been working on rubrics, one for service organizations, and one for training organizations. These rubrics would give information on the service or training and give contact information if the NAHT wants to collaborate with them for a training session or service. Olson noted that this could not only bring more funding, but could also help the NAHT grow and be shown to legislators for proof of work to allow the NAHT to have more funding.

5. Adjournment