

NAHT December 12, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes

Present: John Chesser, George Belitsos, Maggie Tinsman, Deanna Jensen, Lyna Debner, Thomas Barr, Mike Tupper, Stephanie Olson and Linda Harell

Excused Absence: Bernadette Rixner and Shirley Fineran

Absent: Jessica Hagin

Guests: Elizabeth Phan (Technology Consultant), Gretchen Brown-Waech (Attorney General's Office), Chelsea Hoyer (Advocacy Strategies), Shirlee Reding (Emeritus Board Member) and Lindsey Herazy

I. Call to order and attendance; start recording.

The meeting was called to order at 2:32 p.m. by Chesser, NAHT chair. Hoyer introduced Lindsey Herazy who will be substituting for her while on maternity leave.

II. Consent Agenda October 10th minutes, Treasurer reports (Chesser and Belitsos):

Chesser asked if there was any discussion or any amendments to the November 14th Board meeting minutes or the treasurer's report. Belitsos reported that there was only one that came on November 28th in honor of Giving Tuesday with a donation of \$175 and this was disappointing. He noted that there was a generous gift of \$463.25 from a church in Ames and that this church had given \$500 in July. This adds up to \$963.25. Belitsos suggested that Board members should ask their local churches for donations. There was no further discussion and Chesser moved to approve both the meeting minutes and the treasurer's report. Tinsman seconded the motion. **Both the minutes and the treasurer's report were approved unanimously.**

III. Pieper Lewis's legal defense team nominated for the Outstanding Anti-Trafficking Award by Teresa Davidson (Chesser, Belitsos)

Chesser recommended nominating Lewis's legal defense team for an Outstanding Anti-Trafficking Service Award. Chesser moved to approve the nomination. Belitsos seconded the motion. **The nomination for Lewis's legal team was approved unanimously.** Belitsos noted that this is the 5th Awardee to be recognized on January 11th at the NAHT Day on the Hill.

IV. Interim Study Committee Meeting (Nov 28) update and strategy for 2024 legislative session (Chesser, Tinsman, Harms, Hoyer).

Hoyer and Herazy were at the capital today. Hoyer reported that the Interim Study Committee had met on Tuesday, November 28th. Members of the committee as required by Senate file, 562, were charged with reviewing initiatives, laws, policies, and other matters for human trafficking. The Human Trafficking Interim Study Committee met on Tuesday, November 28, 2023, at the Iowa State Capitol from 10 am to 1 pm. As required in SF 562, members of the Committee were charged with reviewing initiatives, laws, policies, and other matters relating to human trafficking, exploring appropriate human trafficking-related training for law enforcement officers, county attorneys, and juvenile service officers, and identifying relevant funding needs.

Legislative members of the Committee included Senators Dan Dawson (Council Bluffs), Brad Zaun (Urbandale), and Janet Petersen (Des Moines), and Representatives Brian Lohse (Bondurant), Mark Thompson (Clarion), and Ross Wilburn (Ames).

Other members of the Committee included Pat Waymire representing the Dept. of Public Safety, John Gish representing the Iowa Attorney General's Office, Ray Fiedler representing the Office to Combat Human Trafficking, Ashley Artzer representing Juvenile Court Services, Dallas County Attorney Meggan Guns, Iowa State Public Defender Matt Scheeley, Altoona Chief of Police Greg Stallman, Lt. Tony Ballantini of Des Moines, Gretchen Brown-Waech representing victims, Co-Founder & CEO of Chains Interrupted Teresa Davison representing NAHT, and Polk County Sheriff Kevin Schneider.

Following member introductions and opening remarks from lawmakers, Ray Fiedler gave an overview of current human trafficking laws, initiatives, and services in Iowa. General discussion of human trafficking prevalent and court procedure followed. Highlighted points of conversation included current funding allocation and sources, available services and housing for Iowa victims, merits and challenges to the adoption of a Safe Harbor law, current statute of limitations laws for trafficking victims, and the use of criminal depositions (specific legislation referenced: SF 525).

The Committee is required to submit a report outlining their findings and recommendations to the Office of the Governor and the General Assembly prior to the commencement of the 2024 Legislative Session. Any proposed legislation or budget recommendations for the 2024 Legislative Session will be identified in this report. We will provide the report once it is filed.

The committee is required to submit a report to the legislature and the governor's office before the startup session, even though the law says, by December 15th, Hoyer has been told that will not happen. So, any recommendations that come out of the committee will be in that report and it will be an indicator of what kind of legislation will be put forward in 2024, as well as any kind of funding increases for the next fiscal year budget.

Tinsman thanked Hoyer for her report on the Interim Study Committee. Tinsman asked who had gotten hold of their senator and representative to advocate for the \$5 million human trafficking funding request and wanted to know what was their response. Chesser had gotten a hold of his senator, Janet Peterson and she was on board completely. Barr has contacted his legislature and has also sent emails to all in the legislature. Belitsos has talked to Representative Ross Wilbur and sent him the legislative agenda and Wilbur will be supporting the legislative agenda and the funding. Belitsos also spoke to Herman Quinnback who is supportive of the funding request. Tinsman emphasized that there are only two weeks before January and would like board members to reach out to their senators and representatives.

Hoyer explained that next week the budget and tax revenue forecast will be announced. The REC (Revenue Estimating Conference) is a body responsible for calculating and estimating fiscal policy matters within the state budget numbers. They will be providing a report that helps lawmakers and the governor's office to understand their budget target which will be crucial for the legislature and how the legislature will be approaching how to ask for funding. Hoyer will send a note to the Board on how to ask for funding after the budget forecast meeting.

V. NAHT board members: terms up for renewal and new nominations (Chesser)

Belitsos motions to approve John Chesser, George Belitsos, Maggie Tinsman, Deanna Jensen, Lyna Debner, Thomas Barr, Mike Tupper, and Stephanie Olson for another two-year term. Barr seconded the motion. Linda Harell and other Board members will continue the existing terms.

The nomination to approve John Chesser, George Belitsos, Maggie Tinsman, Deanna Jensen, Lyna Debner, Thomas Barr, Mike Tupper, and Stephanie Olson for another two-year term was approved unanimously. Belitsos asked Chesser if he had spoken to Hagin about the absences. Chesser had no response and promised to try again to reach Hagin. We still have three vacant seats and will be contacting Hernandez, Stone, and Davidson who have already been nominated.

Chesser motions to approve Kim Hilby as a board member. Tinsman seconded the motion. **The nomination for Kim Hilby was approved unanimously.** Chesser noted that Hilby is a returning Board member.

VI. Plans for January 11th Proclamation Signing and award presentation. Request to endorse January 4th as a day of prayer for survivors. (Belitsos and Lyna)

Belitsos reviewed the January 11th event plans. He asked Board members to be there around 11:00 am and it will start at 11:30 am. Chesser will be greeting the Governor and awardees at the podium and seating them next to the podium with their chairs labeled with their names. Awardees will only have 3-4 minutes to speak. Afterward, Chesser will have three minutes to welcome the audience and discuss the program for the day. The governor will then speak for 3 minutes about her commitment to human trafficking and sign the proclamation. Phan will help set up the information table and take pictures of the proclamation signing. Belitsos asked if any board members could help with the information booth. Belitsos hopes the program will end by 12:13 pm.

Tinsman announced that January 4th at 3:00 pm will be the next Legislative Committee meeting. Waech emphasizes that the legislatures may not be at the capital in the afternoon of January 11th so the board will only have the the time in the morning to speak to legislators.

VII. Motion to endorse the Runaway and Homeless Youth Trafficking Prevention Act pending in Congress. (Belitsos)

Belitsos motioned to endorse the Runaway and Homeless Youth Trafficking Prevention Act pending in Congress. There were no questions or discussions. **The motion to endorsed the Runaway and Homeless Youth Trafficking Prevention Act pending in Congress approved unanimously.**

VIII. Motion to oppose HR2061 that would turn the National Human Trafficking Hotline into a law enforcement tip line (Belitsos)

Belitsos described the legislation and why we should oppose it. Hearing no further discussion, Belitios motioned to oppose HR2061 which would turn the National Human Trafficking Hotline into a law enforcement tip line. There were no questions or discussion. **The motion to oppose HR2061 which would turn the National Human Trafficking Hotline into a law enforcement tip line was approved unanimously.**

IX. Motion to endorse the Frederick Douglas Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act (Belitsos)

Belitsos described the reauthorization of federal legislation and why it is important. There were no questions or discussions. Belitsos motioned to endorse the Frederick Douglas Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act. Barr seconded. **The motion to endorse**

the Frederick Douglas Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act was approved unanimously.

X. Law enforcement concerns about the ineffectiveness of the massage business law (Belitsos)

Belitsos heard concerns and expressed about the massage business Iowa law during the meeting of the November 28th Legislative Interim Study Committee. He asked Chesser to place this on the agenda since the NAHT had spent years working to get a statewide law passed to bring an end to massage businesses that are in fact fronts for sex trafficking. First, the NAHT got over 20 cities to pass local ordinances to regulate massage business. This resulted in 12 businesses being closed and victims rescued. However, some of the fake businesses moved into rural areas where there was no inspection. This led to the statewide law. Tupper has not heard much about law enforcement concerns about the ineffectiveness of the massage business laws, especially from other officers and sheriffs. However, he also mentions that Marshalltown does not have any massage businesses, so the massage business laws do not affect where he lives. Tupper also mentions that law enforcement is aware of the massage business law.

Belitsos mentioned that the DPS has had a meeting to discuss the problems with endorsing the state law. Belitsos suggested the NAHT meet with DPS to see if we can get behind any amendments to improve the law.

XI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 pm