

I respectfully submit the following testimony regarding HB 1348, relating to prohibiting the testing of wastewater for genetic material or evidence of disease.

I am a professor in the department of Microbiological Sciences at NDSU. Over the past 7 months, my lab has been testing wastewater from cities across North Dakota for the COVID virus. We test a half-cup sample, representing just a drop in the ocean of wastewater that flows through a facility in a day (5-15 million gallons for larger cities), yet this has proven remarkably informative about the amount of virus circulating in a community. Testing a single sample of wastewater is considerably more cost effective than mass testing of individuals and data can be produced in within hours. From a privacy standpoint, an important limitation of wastewater monitoring is that it does not, nor cannot reveal personal information about individuals contributing to that watershed. Wastewater monitoring is intended to be a tool to help municipalities make decisions about how best to use their limited resources in the fight against the COVID virus.