

Good afternoon, Chairman Holmberg and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. I am Dr. Christie Massen and I serve as the Chief Laboratory Officer for the ND Department of Health.

I appear before you to support the request for funding to create a state-of-the-art public health laboratory. While there was federal funding provided during the last biennium, building requests for improvements or renovations were not allowable expenses under those federal sources. This one time, infrastructure funding is a great opportunity to address some significant concerns about the current public health laboratory. The current facility was built in 1974 with an addition built in 2004. During the pandemic, we rapidly grew to meet the demands and quickly ran out of space to appropriately manage the increased equipment, supplies, and personnel. In attempt to accommodate the growth, three temporary trailers were added to the parking lot, the Division of Disease Control moved to the capitol, and a distribution warehouse was leased. These temporary facilities house millions of dollars of laboratory instruments and supplies. The funds will address these concerns along with the extensive deferred maintenance in the current building.

Some examples of the deferred maintenance are included in the attached PowerPoint presentation. These images include pictures of water damage from roof leaks, flooring and wall damage from window issues, and chronic leaks in the penthouse roof that require a bucket to permanently sit in front of the building's electrical panel. Also, included are photos of the most recent water damage from a leak in the roof on October 10, 2021. Due to the continued mistrust of the building, a canopy is being ordered to cover one of our newest instruments to protect it when the next inevitable leak occurs. Other concerns that we have related to our building are the maxed-out air handling system, the maxed-out power grid, and other electrical issues such as the recently discovered automatic door that was tied to the thermostat. When the building would call for heat, the electricity would shut off to the door and it would not open.

The distribution center is a leased, 7,500 square foot warehouse. In this facility, the specimen collection devices are created and distributed around the state. The lease cost is \$10,125 per month plus utilities, currently paid with federal funds that expire June 30, 2023. The requested facility will be able to incorporate the distribution center back with the laboratory and would save the funds budgeted for the continued lease of the warehouse.

As I understand the intent of the bill, we will utilize the funds to establish a plan that will be physically and fiscally responsible. The project will likely cost more than the proposed funding. Therefore, once a plan is identified, the remaining budgetary needs will be presented for consideration at the 68th Legislative Assembly in 2023. This facility will address the continued space constraints, safety and security concerns, need for surge capacity, and allow for growth and expansion. The public health laboratory can then fully meet the needs of the citizens of ND and support much-needed federal programs such a chemical threat program and opioid biosurveillance.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.