



NORTH DAKOTA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STATE CAPITOL
600 EAST BOULEVARD
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



Representative Corey Mock

District 18
P.O. Box 12542
Grand Forks, ND 58208-2542
C: 701-732-0085
crmock@nd.gov

COMMITTEES:
Appropriations

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HB 1494 – Law Enforcement Retention Program – Study

Dear Chairman Don Schaible and members of the Senate Education Committee,

I'm before you today as one of the sponsors of HB 1494, a bill to study recruitment, retention, turnover, and training of public law enforcement and correctional officers employed in North Dakota.

HB 1494 was originally introduced to create a law enforcement retention grant program through the Department of Commerce, specifically intended to assist local law enforcement agencies facing disproportionately high turnover rates. We took concepts from NDCC 54-06-31 (state employee recruitment / retention) and 15-10-48.1 (UND school of law recruitment / retention grants) to develop the proposed pilot program.

While the bill as introduced may serve as a good first draft for discussion purposes, sponsors and supporters agreed the topic deserves more discussion and review before launching into a pilot project. Therefore, we offered an amendment to instead study the issue during the upcoming interim.

Law enforcement and correctional workers are an integral part of our public safety network. Onboarding requires an immense use of time and financial resources. Proper and ongoing professional development is not just a matter of public service but can *literally* be the difference between life or death in critical moments.

Studying law enforcement and correctional officer recruitment, retention, training, and development gives us a manageable sample to explore public workforce challenges. It's also focused narrowly enough that recommendations could be easily implemented in the 68th Legislative Assembly and/or individually by political subdivisions.

Success of this study would not only benefit our law enforcement and correctional agencies, but likely help us address other public-sector workforce challenges moving forward.

Thank you again for your time and consideration, Chairman Schaible and members of the committee.