



March 11, 2021

From: Dave Draovitch
Chief of Police

To: Senator David Clemens, Chairman, and Members of the Transportation Committee

Subj: HB 1279

I come before you today to seek your opposition of HB 1279 as it is written today. If passed, this bill will prohibit City leaders across our State the ability to double moving violation traffic fines in effort to provide a deterrent to violating traffic ordinances. Honestly, the ability to double moving violation traffic fines has not had the deterrent effect I had hoped for in Bismarck but I certainly don't want to move backwards.

I am much in favor of the original intent of the Bill which would have been to have uniform speeding fines across our State at \$5 per mile over the speed limit. I would really like to see if that would be a deterrent to speeding violations.

The Bismarck Police Department receives many complaints everyday about people violating City Ordinance. The two violations most often complained about are Speeding and Failing to Stop for Traffic Control Devices (Red Lights). Our citizens do not feel safe when driving due to their concern of people failing to stop for red lights. Our citizens do not feel safe at home due to people excessively speeding in their neighborhoods. We take efforts to proactively deter such behavior by doing special red light enforcement and speed enforcement operations but the fines are so low that people do not see the need to change their behavior. Lieutenant Jeff Solemsaas (BPD Traffic Commander) will be speaking to you soon to provide examples of what he has encountered when taking enforcement actions regarding these issues.

Since traffic fines have not been a deterrent, but speed and failure to stop for traffic signals has been an increasing risk to lives in Bismarck, the City installed blue light confirmation lights to provide a better method of confirming red light violators. In 2019, there were 513 traffic tickets for red light violations and in 2018 there were 445 tickets issued for light violations. While enforcement has been up, anecdotally citizens feel the amount of people running red lights has not changed.

I can tell you the men and women of the Bismarck Police Department are very concerned that without a deterrent the citizens we serve are to continue to be at great risk of serious injury and death. We have many injury and serious injury crashes every year due to people failing to stop for red lights. We also have fatal crashes on occasion due to someone failing to stop for a red light.

I can also tell you the men and women of the Bismarck Police Department are very frustrated. They feel they are not able to adequately protect our citizens because there is no deterrent due to the traffic fines being so low. They feel their efforts are in vain. As stated earlier we do special traffic operations and they are

Dave Draovitch, Chief of Police

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successful but they are only successful during the time we are doing the special operation. As soon as people realize we are out of the area and the operation is complete the deterrent, our officers, is gone. We do not have the resources to do special operations everyday throughout the entire City.

A common misperception when Bills of this nature are introduced is that Law Enforcement wants to raise revenue for their Department. Law Enforcement does not receive any money from traffic fines.

Although I cannot speak to specifics, many of the Chiefs of Police across the State of North Dakota experience similar issues and have similar concerns as we do in Bismarck.

I thank you for the time I have been allowed to provide information about this very important Bill and I thank you for considering opposing it as it is written today.

If you have any questions feel free to contact me at your convenience. I may be reached at ddraovitch@bismarcknd.gov or 701-223-1212.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dave Draovitch", with a stylized flourish at the end.

DAVE DRAOVITCH
Chief of Police