

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. I'm Ron Henke, Director of the North Dakota Department of Transportation (DOT). I'm here to provide testimony in opposition to House Bill 1285.

House Bill 1285 essentially limits the executive branch from introducing agency specific legislation by requiring the agency to identify at least one member of the legislative assembly to be the primary sponsor of any such legislation.

Executive Branch agencies, such as the NDDOT, introduces legislation each session for many reasons. This session the NDDOT was required to introduce several pieces of legislation due to changes at the federal level following the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). It is the responsibility of the NDDOT to review all changes at the federal level related to transportation infrastructure and funding. This is necessary to ensure that North Dakota has access to all funding and services it is entitled to. Updates to current North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) are often required for continued participation in federal programs and to take advantage of new federal programs which may be created. The NDDOT must also be responsive to the citizens of North Dakota by being adaptable and flexible enough to meet their changing needs. Agency sponsored legislation can be a critical part of this process, ensuring needed authority and resources are available.

The current process which allows executive branch agencies to introduce legislation has proved to both be efficient and time saving, allowing the legislative assembly to effectively manage their workload. Adding the additional step which requires an agency to secure a legislative sponsor simply adds complexity to the current process which is unnecessary. The legislature already has significant oversight over legislation introduced by agencies, which ensures that legislative intent is heard and incorporated. Members of the legislative assembly vote on agency sponsored legislation both in committee and on the floor in both the House and the Senate. Members of the legislative assembly can also introduce amendments to agency sponsored legislation. The current process allows all parties to the legislative process to successfully fulfill their responsibilities to the citizens of North Dakota.

This concludes my testimony. Thank You.