

TESTIMONY

Douglas Nelson, State Fire Marshal

House Industry, Business and Labor Committee

March 25th, 2025

Representative Warrey, Chairman of the House Industry, Business and Labor Committee, and Committee members,

As both a volunteer firefighter and a full-time firefighter, I have been on many emergency incidents involving elevators. I have also trained and responded to use elevators as part of the fire service's emergency operations. In either form, it is important for them to be safe for citizens to operate under normal conditions, and critical to firefighters during an emergency that they work properly. Senate Bill 2336 proposes regulating conveyance elevators through the electrical board.

Over the last five years, North Dakota fire departments have responded to 460 incidents where our citizens were removed from or stuck in a stalled elevator. This is an average of 92 times every year. On top of that, we as the North Dakota Fire Service also respond on average to a defective elevator with no occupants approximately 25 times annually.

These responses are not only a safety concern, but also take fire departments out of service during that response for other emergencies. Considering that much of our state is rural and may not have elevators, this burden is shifted greatly to the larger city fire departments.

Not only would an elevator inspector advocate for safety through licensing and inspections, but would assist building and fire officials with elevator code. Both the state building and fire codes have elevator related safety items referenced. However, we often lack the experience or training to understand much beyond the little that our codes cover. An elevator inspection program would increase safety, reduce emergency response burdens, and assist local and state jurisdictions with safety enforcement.

Thank you for your time today. I respectfully ask for your support on Senate Bill 2336.