

Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota

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House Industry, Business and Labor

Re: SB 2336

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

My name is Darren Schimke, President of the Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota (PFFND). I represent 420 professional firefighters across the State of North Dakota. We do appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 2336.

As a career firefighter in Grand Forks, I have been part of a crew that has responded to countless emergency calls pertaining to elevator issues over my career. These responses mainly consist of stalled elevators with no souls on board, stalled elevators with trapped souls on board not experiencing any medical and/or psychological issues, and trapped souls on board that are experiencing medical and/or psychological issues. Whatever the circumstances encountered, we have to locate the stalled elevator car, determine if anyone is trapped and remove them safely, medically assess and treat the trapped souls, disable the elevator system, mark the system "out of service", and notify building maintenance or owner of the issue. This process takes time and dedicates resources that may be needed at an emergency scene elsewhere. In Grand Forks, we responded to 13 elevator incidences in 2022, 10 in 2023, and 9 in 2024, respectfully.

With not having a formal licensing and inspection system within North Dakota, some elevator systems are not thoroughly inspected regularly. When a new system is installed, it is inspected by the local Fire Marshalls office and then yearly, thereafter. There are many components to an elevator system: mechanical, electrical, cables, brakes, and fire safety. We are not experts with these systems and Fire Marshalls test the "Fire Service Control" only. During an emergency, and if it is deemed safe, the fire department can use an elevator car to move equipment from floor to floor by using the Fire Service Control.

Reputable elevator maintenance companies exist and have agreements with some building owners. Those systems rarely experience issues. The ones that don't have agreements seem to be problematic. Also, I am aware of elevator businesses that operate out of a garage/rental storage unit. I'm not saying that they are not reputable, I am saying that they may be flying under the radar without a State Licensing system in place. With SB 2336 in place, a quicker response and repair by a licensed elevator maintenance company may take place. As it stands now, some building owners can drag their feet with repairs.

SB 2336 is really about public safety and the safety of first responders. The PFFND respectfully requests a Do Pass of SB 2336 and I stand for any questions.

Thank you, Darren Schimke