

Energy and Natural Resources Committee

SB 2267

March 11, 2025

Chairperson Porter and members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Aaron Johnson, and I am the President of the North Dakota Environmental Health Association (NDEHA). Our association advocates for the protection of the environmental health of all citizens of North Dakota through the licensure and education of local environmental health practitioners (EHP). I am providing testimony today in opposition to SB 2267.

Since 1976, local public health units in North Dakota have partnered with state agencies as the primary provider of inspection and permitting of residential and commercial septic systems. Following the elimination of requirements at the state level, local public health partnered with licensed installers in the industry to create a universal code and permitting program that was operate on a county-by-county basis. At this time, all or portions of 42 counties in North Dakota use this code.

The relationship between local septic system installers and their local public health inspector is a lynchpin necessary to the administration of any septic inspection program in North Dakota. As has been identified in previous sessions of Congress, state agencies lack the manpower to provide timely inspections and professional consultation to the installers in all 53 counties, and provision for state inspection under the ND Plumbing Board would require massively increasing state budgets for a resource that is already being supported more than adequately through local funding sources.

Proper septic system installation protects drinking water sources from contamination, which in turn increases the health and well being of the citizens of North Dakota. The dedicated network of local public health EHPs that already exists provides the necessary expertise and service to local installers, and removing that network in favor of inexperienced plumbing inspectors at great cost does not protect the environment or the health of North Dakota's citizens. Because of these reasons, NDEHA encourages you not to support SB 2267.

Respectfully,

Aaron Johnson

President, North Dakota Public Health Association

Registered Environmental Health Practitioner (REHS), Master's of Public Health