

Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. My name is Jeremie Meisel, and I am the owner of EH Investigations and Security LLC, an agency based in Bismarck, ND. I am submitting here today alongside my fellow business owners to voice our strong opposition to Senate Bill 2051. This bill represents not only a significant financial burden for small businesses but also raises serious concerns about the management and operations of the North Dakota Private Investigation and Security Board (NDPISB).

The proposed fee increase, which more than doubles the current licensing and certification fees, is unjustifiable. This will place North Dakota's fees for private investigators, security guards, and security companies among the highest in the country. As someone who has been licensed as a private investigator in North Dakota, and Louisiana, I can attest that this increase is an unnecessary burden on our industry, especially with getting nothing in return from the Board.

The Board currently finds itself in financial problems, particularly those incurred while litigating against TigerSwan. Yet, they have offered no clear indication of how doubling the fees will lead to improved operations or better services for licensees. As agency owners we would love to know what we are getting for our money or if the situation is so dire, we can help. Other agencies have reached out to the Board to assist with renewals free of charge, but these offers were declined by Director Shorey. There is much a NDPISB could do for our agencies, such as advocate for lower work comp premiums and possibly expand coverage to those similar to the law enforcement. The security industry is overlooked and not much thought is given to our industry and the NDPISB has done a poor job representing our interests to the legislature. I would like a strong voice on the Boards that could advocate for us in matters that affect us.

To steal a phrase from another agency owner; the NDPISB has become, in my view, an unelected and unregulated code enforcement agency, I feel this sums up the Board very well. They operate with little oversight that favors some agencies over others, with timely issuance of their registration cards and certificates. I have personally experienced delays in the processing of our license renewals, which shows you the inefficiencies that plague the Board, year after year, with no end in sight unless a massive increase of fees is passed on to us agency owners, apparently that is the only course of action the Board has come up with. I have not received my certificates since 2021 even though I pay my renewals every year. Despite the financial burden this proposed fee increase would place on small businesses; the Board has not demonstrated an ability to manage its current funds. I cannot trust them to with any additional funds. The funds that could be reinvested into my own company.

Communication from the Board has been severely lacking, there has been no outreach regarding such significant changes to our fees. The lack of communication and transparency raises doubts about the Board's commitment to serving the agencies. In Director Shorey's testimony to the North Dakota Senate Industry and Business meeting on 08 JAN 2025, he stated that he had notified the agency owners of the proposed increases, but he absolutely did not, I had to hear about it from another agency owner. The lack of transparency shown by the board is very telling of their feelings to us and look at us as little more than a revenue stream to be squeezed when they need more money.

The NDPISB must not burden those agencies it serves with this high of a fee increase and must undergo a thorough audit of its financial records. Before requesting additional funds from the licenses it serves,

the Board must first demonstrate its capability to manage existing resources efficiently and implement practical solutions to address its operational challenges.

I'm born and raised in North Dakota, I have always taken pride in our common sense and ability to effectively solve problems together, I feel the course the Board is taking is anathema to those North Dakota values. I hope this committee sees that as well in the testimony provided today.

I urge the Committee to issue a DO NOT PASS recommendation on Senate Bill 2051. The burden of these proposed fees will disproportionately impact small businesses like ours, and the NDPIB must first prove its ability to manage its current resources effectively before seeking additional funds.

Thank you for consideration on this critical matter. It has taken a lot for us agency owners to speak out about this bill, we fear reprisals and that we may be targeted for opposing the Board. They hold the power of our licenses over us and if we step out of line, they could make life difficult for us if they want. We only want fairness and common-sense solutions and would love to be part of that solution. We hope that our collective voices will contribute to a regulatory framework that genuinely supports the growth and sustainability of security agencies in North Dakota.

Sincerely,

Jeremie Meisel