

Testimony in Support HB 1408 — with Recommendations

Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Ben Kappel, a lifelong North Dakotan, real estate professional, and someone who hopes to serve this great state in elected office one day. I'm writing in **general support of House Bill 1408**, which proposes an annual legislative session structure. I believe this bill moves us in the right direction by encouraging a more responsive, agile legislature that can address emerging challenges in real time, rather than waiting two years for the next opportunity.

That said, I offer this testimony not only in support, but with a few **critical concerns and constructive recommendations**.

Balance Responsiveness with Responsibility

While annual sessions may improve responsiveness, they must not lead to **legislative bloat**. North Dakota is a **majority-Republican state**, and our party stands for **limited government**. That principle should not be abandoned simply because we're meeting more frequently.

There must be intentional guardrails to ensure we are not doubling the number of bills introduced simply because we meet twice as often. **More time should not mean more legislation**, especially when much of it is duplicative or unlikely to pass.

Stop the Endless Reintroduction of Failed Bills

One major concern is the **recycling of legislation**. Annual sessions could unintentionally become an avenue for special interests — often from out of state — to **resurrect failed or unpopular bills**, hoping that the public isn't watching as closely the second or third time around.

Take, for example, the repeated proposals to change **time zones or daylight saving time**. These bills come back year after year, despite widespread public confusion and concern. Do we need to stress our constituents annually with the same controversial topics that have already been decided?

We must consider incorporating **a cooling-off period or reintroduction limits** for bills that have failed decisively, especially if they carry no significant new data or public demand.

Reduce Public Stress and Protect Trust

When the legislature is in session, **the public pays attention — and feels the stress**. Our residents worry about how proposed laws will affect their schools, jobs, healthcare, and personal lives. **We owe them a process that is streamlined, thoughtful, and respectful of their peace of mind**.

Increased frequency should not mean **increased anxiety**, and that's something we, as future and current public servants, need to take seriously.

In closing, I believe HB 1408 has great potential — but only **if paired with reforms** that protect transparency, reduce redundancy, and uphold our conservative values of small, effective government. Let's make North Dakota's legislature more agile, **not more bloated**. And above all, let's honor the trust of the people we serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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