

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kali Olin, and I am the Deputy EMS Director for Billings County. I am here to strongly support House Bill 1419, which would include Emergency Services Workers in the North Dakota Public Employee Retirement System's Public Safety Plan. This bill is essential for recognizing the critical role of EMS workers and ensuring the recruitment and retention of dedicated personnel in our profession.

EMS professionals, including paramedics, EMTs, and dispatchers, face high-stress situations and physical, emotional, and mental challenges every day. Despite these demands, they are not currently included in the Public Safety Plan, unlike other first responders such as law enforcement and fire personnel. This gap in benefits creates disparities that make it more difficult to attract and retain qualified individuals to serve our communities.

House Bill 1419 will not only acknowledge the sacrifices EMS workers make but also ensure that we can recruit new talent to the profession. Across the state, EMS agencies are struggling with staffing shortages, and including EMS in the Public Safety Plan will help address this issue by providing security and showing future employees that their service is valued.

Moreover, the role of dispatchers must be recognized as part of the first responder family. Dispatchers play a crucial role in coordinating emergency responses, and they endure the same pressures as the rest of the first responder team. Including them in this plan will support their continued service and help fill critical gaps in our emergency response systems.

I urge you to support House Bill 1419. By doing so, you'll help strengthen public safety in North Dakota, ensure our workforce is supported, and secure the future of EMS in the state. Thank you for your time and consideration, and please reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,
Kali Olin
Deputy EMS Director, Billings County