

House Human Service  
Chairman - Representative Robin Weisz  
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## Testimony

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### HCR 3007

Good morning Chairman Weisz and members of the House Human Service Committee, my name is Shaun Sipma, Mayor of the City of Minot. I am here today to speak in opposition to of House Concurrent Resolution 3007 terminating the state of emergency in North Dakota.

The current state of emergency is vital for accessibility to Federal Disaster funds as it become available for the continued fight against COVID-19. Funds to this point that have been utilized not only by the state, but but also by cities, counties and municipalities around North Dakota.

Currently Minot' own firefighters are conducting drive-through Binax testing that allows residents, not just from Minot, but also from neighboring communities, to drive up, take a test, and get results in 15 minutes. 75% of those costs are reimbursable by FEMA because of the disaster declaration. For the first two weeks of testing 766 voluntarily showed up to take the test. 63 people tested positive which is an 8% positivity rate. For contrast, Ward County was identified in late November / early December as the most infectious county in the country. Our hospital was on the brink of capacity, our morgues were at capacity and at times beyond capacity.

Our current numbers show that we have made substantial ground in greatly reducing the community spread, but it's still present. Vaccinations are underway for medical professionals, first responders, and long-term care facilities. Progress is being made but the most vulnerable population, Tier B1, 65 and older, isn't far enough along yet. Simply put we haven't turned the corner far enough yet to say that the emergency is over.

I'm not a medical expert, so I'm not going to attempt to get into the issue of new strains or infectious numbers from around the country. I do however listen to my local health officials. They are the medical professionals on our front line. They are optimistic about our current local trends, but they continue to tell me this fight isn't over yet.

We are currently working with our Health District in planning a larger scale vaccination clinic to accommodate the large number of people wanting their vaccine, both those getting their first shot and those coming in for the booster. Because people have to be socially distanced and monitored for 15 minutes after the receive the shot, extra space and personnel are needed. There is cost associated with all of that. If emergency funds aren't available because the declaration has been repealed, that pushes those costs either to the state or local governments.

I am all too aware of the polarized issue that surrounds COVID and the effects of the emergency declaration. Local leaders from around the state have been working this since March 2020 through today. I can tell you we are tired. But not nearly as tired as the medical professionals who have been our heroes and continue to work diligently not only to treat COVID patients but

all other medical needs in every aspect of communities. Yet they continue their fight and they are resolved to continue.

I would ask you to consider the implications and the cost if it is all put back on local health units and local communities. If emergency funds aren't available for testing, those local efforts dry up with the funding.

Without a doubt everyone wants to get life back to normal. Life after COVID. Repealing the emergency declaration now would be a mistake. I urge a "do not pass" recommendation. Thank you for your time and consideration.