

February 3, 2021
House Industry, Business and Labor
Honorable Chairman Mike Lefor

HB 1486
AMEND

Chairman Lefor and members of the Industry, Business and Labor Committee, for the record my name is Becky Ault, Director of the Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point, and Co-Chair of the ND 911 Association Legislative Committee. I urge a change to the language of HB1486, which relates the limitations on the authorized access to telephone records and the sale or procurement of telephone records.

I have been the director in Grand Forks for ten years. Prior to that, I worked as a regional coordinator in northeast ND in the Homeland Security Division at the Department of Emergency Services for 2 years, and prior to that I was the Pembina County Emergency Manager and 911 Director for 14 years. I give you that background to show that over the years, I have worked with both large paid departments, as well as small rural departments, and all disciplines, encompassing law enforcement, fire personnel, emergency medical services, public works, and schools, to name a few. I can tell you that there are circumstances, in counties both large and small, where 911 dispatch services, based upon the request of responding agencies, and under emergency circumstances that could result in death or injury – leverage technology, partnering with our cell phone companies, to locate an individual. This does not happen often, and we have processes in place to ensure there are exigent circumstances, but we have located individuals that are suicidal, or have autism or other cognitive challenges, or have another type of medical emergency where we need to locate them to enable responders to render aid. We refer to this as “pinging” the cell phone.

The section of the proposed bill that we find concerning is located on page 2 lines 26 and 27. This is located in 57-34-05(d). Specifically identifying “medical”, as well as “occurred”. We are concerned this may limit our ability to request technological assistance from our industry partners to locate individuals that are in danger, when an incident may be pending.

We thank you for your service and for your consideration of this recommended adjustment in the language of this bill.