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Testimony
House Bill 1186
House Political Subdivisions
Friday, February 12 2021; 9:30 a.m.
North Dakota Emergency Medical Services Association

Good morning, Chairman Dockter and members of the committee. My name is Adam Parker, and I am the Chair of the North Dakota Emergency Medical Services Association's (NDEMSEA) Advocacy Committee. I am here today to testify in support of HB 1186 and the proposed amendments.

HB 1186 seeks to reduce the burden on ambulance services establishing a Rural Ambulance Taxing District and allow for annexation of territory when necessary. Additionally, the bill seeks to clarify certain language to ensure ambulance districts are compliant with the law.

Currently, if there is a proposal to establish a taxing district, it must be determined how many people that reside in the proposed territory voted in the last election. Twenty percent of that number is how many signatures are needed on the petition. Since ambulance service areas often cover multiple counties and do follow voting precinct lines, this is a very difficult and time-consuming number to determine. The process has resulted in ambulance services not making ballot deadlines and significantly delaying potential funding, simply because they could not determine how many petition signatures were necessary.

Additionally, in the unfortunate event that an ambulance service closes, the neighboring ambulance must pick up that service area. This bill will allow those that are taxing districts an avenue to place themselves on the ballot to annex in that new territory. This is important because the Rural EMS Assistance Grant has a distribution formula that bases the local match on the service areas property tax valuation. If the service cannot easily annex in the new territory they are essentially penalized in the grant.

Ambulance services in North Dakota face many challenges. This bill will help relieve the burden placed on the service leaders, who are often volunteer, that seek to establish a district to sustain ambulance service operations in rural North Dakota.

This concludes my testimony, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.