

Testimony Prepared for the
Senate GVA
March 3, 2021
Donnell Preskey, NDACo



RE: Supportive Testimony for HB 1146 – SIRN

Chair Vedaa and committee members, I'm Donnell Preskey with North Dakota Association of Counties. We stand in support of the HB 1146.

I serve as the NDACo representative on the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC). This committee has been incredibly busy and focused since last session on efforts to get the SIRN project going. And there has been tremendous progress.

As we were working on the radio reimbursement element, it came to our attention that entities such as fire and ambulance districts would not be eligible for the state cost share for the radios due to language in the 2019 SIRN bill (HB 1435). That bill provides a \$1500 cost share for hand-held and mobile radios. It was the opinion the language only allowed city and county law enforcement, fire fighters and emergency medical personnel to be eligible.

From my involvement with the SIRN bill in 2019 and providing testimony to this committee and others, I know that from a supporters perspective it was not the intention to leave out those entities. And based on my discussions with legislators then and now, it was not the legislature's intent either. We need to correct this, as those volunteer fire and ambulances are entities that need this cost share the most.

The language we are asking you to support will open the cost-share eligibility to those tied to a political subdivision or a nongovernmental emergency services provider operating in the state. This language will allow for fire districts, ambulance districts, emergency managers, highway engineers, public works, schools eligible for the cost-share.

There is no additional cost, the radios this bill addresses, were included in the formula used in the 2019 legislation. I would be remiss if I didn't say, the cost of the radios is greater than estimated two years ago, as a federal law requires law enforcement to have encrypted radios. However, we recognize the commitment the state has already made for this project.

What this bill will provide, is the ability for **all** our responders to receive state funds for a portion of their radios which will increase participation and ultimately, closing the gap between our responders so they can have the interoperability that we as a state are pursuing.