HB 1146 TESTIMONY - SUPPORT
SENATE GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
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Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Duane Schell. I am the Chief Technology Officer with North Dakota Information Technology (NDIT). In addition, I represent the Chief Information Officer on the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) and I am currently serving as the chair of that committee. I am here to express support for House Bill 1146.

This bill provides for what I believe unintended consequences in legislation passed during the last legislative session. Specifically, HB 1453 of the 66th legislative assembly provided funding, a funding formula and authority to proceed with the Statewide Interoperable Radio Network (SIRN) project. This project, which is estimated to take five years to complete, will provide a single, statewide, mission critical communications solution that will meet the rigorous needs and standards of the public safety community. I am pleased to tell you that this project is well on its way to meeting this goal.

The primary objective of this bill is to adjust the language regarding the scope of who is eligible for the $1500 cost share relating to each radio that can access the network. The current language limits this cost share to county and city jurisdictions and excludes the large and critical volunteer community as they do not fall under the definition of a county or city within NDCC. The volunteer ambulance and volunteer fire districts are critical to providing public safety services and response to the rural areas of our state and are some of the most financially constrained members of the public safety community. By changing the language to "a political subdivision" we remove this limitation. I will also add that there is no fiscal note associated with this bill as the funding strategy provided last session did include this stakeholder group.

This concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions.