

Chairman Vigesaa & House Appropriations Committee Members,

My name is Brian Paulson, I serve as the fire chief for the Jamestown Rural Fire Department. I am offering my written testimony in support of SB 2010.

The ND volunteer fire service I believe is going through a generational shift. This is occurring not only with the age of volunteers but with the evolution of modern firefighting equipment & training, building codes, new construction materials, economic development, and the high expectation of services by the general public of what their local volunteer fire service is to be providing for them.

This legislation is the end result of many legislative session discussions on how best to move the ND fire service forward, and provide accountability the legislature has asked for but also to align all aspects of the fire service together to have some much needed and long overdue cohesion.

1. The move of the State Fire Marshals Office makes sense and I believe will allow this agency to have the support system it needs to be successful in its responsibilities.

The 4 FTEs that are being requested I believe are warranted, for this agency to have no additional hires for 40 years is unheard of. While our fire district has not seen the rapid economic development that our neighbors in the eastern or western part of the state have experienced. In the last decade our fire district has seen positive economic growth of \$984,000,000 of investment by large facilities such as: Applied Blockchain 100 MW crypto mining - \$35,000,000; ADM/Marathon soy bean crushing plant- \$350,000,000; Dakota Spirit Ag Energy Ethanol Plant - \$155,000,000; GreatRiverEnergy Spiritwood Station-425,000,000; Agricovert Industries - \$10,000,000; Gavilon Grain & Fertilizer - \$9,000,000.

All these facilities have had fire suppression plans and systems that needed to be reviewed and inspected. We do not have the staffing or expertise to review and approve these, we have relied heavily on the State Fire Marshals Office to assist with this process.

My agency has witnessed firsthand the limitations of the staffing deficiencies. Long response times to investigate fire scenes for cause origin, waiting up to 24 - 48 hrs for a response to a fire scene is an extremely poor reflection for all us in service to our communities and does not serve property owners justly. Long plan review & inspection delays for new economic development are costly to timelines and budgets. Again, a poor reflection on how well we are prepared to handle new economic growth.

Additional staff to help fire departments with ISO rating mitigation will help lower property owners insurance premiums. The ISO process is very complex, fire departments are bound by century code to try and lower ISO rating but there are minimal means available to assist with planning for that process.

2. The NDFA – This piece of the legislation is critical to give this agency a stable & accountable budgeting process so they can focus their mission on training. I believe being under the Insurance Commissioners Office will also help create untapped opportunities through the insurance industry and allow for the growth and development of their training programs.

In closing, this has been a very thoughtfully crafted piece of legislation that has really set the table to make a long-lasting positive impact for the ND fire service. This truly addresses the generational shift issues and responsibilities that I and others are facing today as a volunteer fire chief.

I respectfully urge a "AS IS" due pass on SB 2010.