

HB 1266 – Testimony by Dustin Gawrylow (Lobbyist #266) North Dakota Watchdog Network

Mr. Chairman,

This bill is primarily here because of actions that have taken place here locally in Bismarck and Burleigh County.

As many of you know, I have been a long time critic of the Renaissance Zone program – and have been heavily involved with addressing this locally in Bismarck/Burleigh.

I have also personally been serving on the Bismarck Renaissance Zone Authority since 2019 when Mayor Steve Bakken appointed me to the committee.

My philosophy since being appointed has been “if it were up to me, the program would not exist, but as long as it does, I will do what I can to make it work for Bismarck.”

As HB stands today, I am taking a Neutral Stance on this bill as it only allows cities to come back into the system.

However, I will issue a caveat: if this bill is amended to remove the ability for other political subdivisions to have a say in how their tax revenue streams (protections that were created by the passage and enactment of 2017’s SB 2166) this neutral position will change.

One political subdivision should not have the power to influence the revenue of another political subdivision based on a discretionary tax exemption.

In conclusion, if the goal of this session is to simply give cities a second chance at the program, I do not see a problem on the surface. But if the overall goal is to do more than that, either in this bill or another bill, our position will change.

Thank you for your consideration.