

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the House Industry, Business and Labor Committee.

My name is Austen Schauer, representing District 13 in West Fargo.

I am here today to seek your support of **House Bill 1143**.

What is the definition of **theft**?

According to Webster, it's the **action or crime of stealing**.

That is obvious, but not as obvious as you may think.

Recently, I was contacted by an Equipment and Supply business in Fargo. It sells and rents construction equipment.

A man had rented some equipment valued at more than 40 thousand dollars.

The rental payment was set up to pay from a credit card.

That worked fine for three months and then the man stopped paying.

His credit card was repeatedly declined.

The phone number given to the rental company was disconnected and communication ended.

When the company ^{contacted} ~~connected~~ police and then an attorney, they were told this is a **civil matter** because of a rental contract.

So, is it a crime to not return rental property?

Is it a crime to steal rental property?

HB 1143 makes it clear that **it is a crime**, and we hope you agree.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and committee members.

We seek your full support of **House Bill 1143**.