

**Testimony**  
**Senate Bill 2253**  
**House Industry, Business & Labor | March 15, 2023 | 2:15 pm**

Chairman Louser and members of the Committee,

Thank you for accepting my neutral testimony for Senate Bill 2253 in writing as I am not able to be in Bismarck today. My name is Steve Kemp and I have been a Williams County Commissioner since 2016. As Commissioner, I hold the Economic Development Portfolio and I am also a member of the Upper Missouri District Health Unit (UMDHU) Board of Health.

UMDHU is a valuable asset in our community. Over the past decade, northwestern North Dakota has experienced an incredible amount of change and development with the growth of the oil industry. UMDHU officials have worked hard to emphasize the importance of environmental health as well as implement the appropriate codes and rules. In the next 10 years, we will see further expansion of not just the oil industry, but the energy sector as a whole, with the anticipation of several new value-added natural gas projects coming into the County. These projects will bring a new wave of population growth as we hope that families will continue to call our area home as new jobs open up.

With the development of both industry and the increase of our population, which has nearly doubled since 2010, UMDHU has had to work extra hard to ensure the integrity of the construction of septic systems. There have for sure been lessons learned, both on the County side when it comes to development, as well as with UMDHU, but the best path forward is that public health and the Department of Environmental Quality get to remain at the forefront of the development and implementation of rules and regulations for septic systems.

I stand neutrally today as I primarily would like to emphasize the important role of local public health officials for current and future discussion of this bill.

SB 2253 would call for only three members of local public health to serve on the onsite wastewater recycling technical committee, however, four seats will be filled by installers. To maintain equal representation of installers with local public health officials, it is respectfully requested to increase the number of local public health members to four.

Additionally, to ensure that the rules and regulations for septic systems remain in the best interest of environmental and human health, we support having such rules live within administrative code with the Department of Environmental Quality for development, oversight, and guidance. Flexibility is key for responding to our everchanging community and new industries that establish themselves in North Dakota.

As our region continues to experience residential, commercial, and industrial growth, it is more important than ever that our local officials – in all capacities – continue to have a seat at the table.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Steve Kemp, Williams County Commissioner

**Steve Kemp**  
**District 2 County Commissioner**