



**Testimony Regarding HB 1127
House Political Subdivision Committee**

January 12, 2023

Prepared by: Dana G. Larsen, PE, Ward County Engineer

RE: Support for HB 1127 – Relating to county highways and bridges and relating to cost limitations for a county bridge.

Chairman Longmuir and House Political Subdivision Committee members, my name is Dana Larsen and I serve as the County Engineer for Ward County. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1127 which will update the bidding requirements for county highway and bridges, remove outdated restrictions and bring uniformity into the bidding requirements.

Currently, the bidding threshold and bidding requirements are not uniform between the road and bridge sections of the century code and with different advertising requirements and bidding amounts. Also there are dollar values listed in the bridge section that are out of date. In NDCC 24-08-01, there is a requirement for County Commissions to investigate the necessity of a bridge if it costs more than \$500. For reference, 30 feet of 18-inch metal culvert costs over \$1,000, which does not include installation. In NDCC 24-08-09 it stated the total cost to any county of any bridge built under the provisions of section 24-08-05 across a navigable river in no case may exceed \$300,000. It would be difficult to build any highway bridge for under \$300,000, and the cost of environmental and engineering would exceed the \$300,000 limit on some bridges.

This bill would increase the bid threshold to \$200,000 for road and bridge projects which would bring it into alignment with the Public Improvement threshold of \$200,000. There would still be a requirement for the county to seek quotes from

at least two contractors when the cost of the improvement is between \$50,000 and \$200,000. These changes would assist the county in addressing maintenance project such as patching, road repairs, culvert replacement, or bridge repair projects, when items need to be addressed and the number of summer construction days are limited. In the past we would take quotes from suppliers for bridge materials and culverts to be install by our crews. Those material cost would be under \$30,000, however, now many of those same materials exceed \$30,000 and would take about 45 to 60 days to bid out. I was not able to find when the last time the values in this section (NDCC 24-08-03) were updated, but it appears the last time any changes were made to this section of the century code was forty years ago. I looked back in my records and in 1983, Ward County bid out the construction of a new concrete bridge, on a paved county road over the Des Lacs River, located west of Kenmare North Dakota. This was a federal aid project, and the total cost of the project was around \$110,000. In 2023, we will be bidding the replacement of a bridge in Donnybrook, downs stream about 15 miles from Kenmare on the Des Lacs River and we are estimating the cost to be over \$1.2 million.

The addition of the emergency language or the road section of the century code which mirrors the emergency language in the bridge section will also make the century code more uniform and less complicated to implement. For example, most of the time when a roadway or bridge is impacted by flooding, both are damaged and need to be repaired to open the road. There are also instances if a small bridge were to be damage, many time the bridges are replaced with large culvert or box culverts, but the confusion would be, is this a road project or bridge project and what bidding requirements would we need to follow.

Chairman Longmuir and committee members, I want to thank you for your time today, and I would ask for your support on these changes which bring more consistency in the bidding process for both roads and bridges, and align the bidding threshold with other public improvements.