

January 24, 2023

From: Lt. Jeff Solemsaas

To: House Transportation Committee

Re: HB 1325

Chairman Ruby and Representatives of the House Transportation,

My name is Jeff Solemsaas, I'm here to voice our support for HB 1325. This bill would increase the fees assigned to right of way violations. This bill is strongly supported by the Bismarck Police Department

I have been a law enforcement officer for almost 30 years, for the last 10 I have been assigned as the Traffic Commander for the City of Bismarck Police Department. Currently we investigate approximately 3000 traffic collisions each year. A large portion of those collisions involve a right of way violation. By increasing the fees associated with these violations you are providing a deterrent for drivers to exercise care and caution while driving.

The attitude among many drivers is that traffic violations are not important and that violations carry no real penalty. Many drivers have the mentality that if they are caught by law enforcement for a violation there is no effect other than a minor fee. I have spoken with numerous drivers that have reported that they feel the chances of getting caught are minimal and if they are the penalties are even smaller. It should be noted that the fees assigned to traffic violations have not changed in the last 50 years.

There is no benefit to law enforcement from the enhanced penalties as none of the funds received from traffic violations are distributed to law enforcement. Bismarck has an ordinance that requires all fees from traffic violations be distributed to the general fund. The most important factor to consider is that you are providing a deterrent to bad driving. If the fees associated with traffic violations had some type of effect on drivers, they may choose to drive with more caution to avoid a financial consequence.

Any law enforcement officer would be able to relate a story in which they have stopped a driver for another state for a traffic violation. Upon receiving the citation and having the consequences explained the common response is disbelief that the fees are so low. I have had numerous encounters with drivers from other states that have laughed at the extremely low fees.

In other sessions other legislators have made comments that they know they are safer drivers when they leave ND due to the fact that they want to avoid traffic citations. I frequently receive complaints from citizens relating to traffic violations in the community. The most common statement I receive is that "you have to raise the fees for these violations". I always explain to them that they need to contact their legislators. I'm quite certain they never do.

I appreciate your consideration and time relating to this bill.