

Testimony of Travis Bateman, Founder/Director
Badlands Search and Rescue
Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of North Dakota

In Support of HB 1336

1/15/2023

Chairman Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee:

I am Travis Bateman, and I am representing Badlands Search and Rescue (Badlands SAR) and the newly formed Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of North Dakota (SARVAND) testifying in support of HB 1336.

Both organizations are based out of Watford City but there are members across North Dakota and our primary purpose is to assist law enforcement and emergency services in search and rescue incidents of lost, injured, missing, or otherwise distressed persons and return them to a place of safety or to medical care. Badlands Search and Rescue was founded in September 2018 and currently has a membership of 25, with eight being on for two years or longer.

Our team does not receive any government funding. Our members supply all their own gear, vehicles, fuel, hotel, food, and other applicable costs when responding and operating on missions. The organization provides training and certification, some additional equipment, and insurance coverage but we survive solely off donations and sometimes grant funds.

With that, one modification that may be needed with the language of the bill or at least discussed is that pertaining to the license plate numbers as we have members over various counties and therefore ZIP codes. However, if it is to go off where the organization is based, then the language would suffice as it currently is written.

As the founder and director of Badlands SAR and SARVAND I speak in support of this bill to recognize and assist our volunteer members with this recognition by license plate. As stated above, our members pay out of pocket to respond to SAR incidents. To date, those have been as far as Fort Yates, ND and have been as many as four nights worth of hotel and food expenses. We have very dedicated members that will still foot those costs regardless of this bill, but the offset of vehicle registration in addition to the further identification feature the license plates would provide would serve as a thank you from the state for their services and a morale booster that highlights what they are doing is appreciated and doesn't go unseen.

We have members that are preparing to go to training in Mississippi as they purchased their own bloodhound trailing dogs specifically to benefit our team and therein, North Dakota. All at their own expense. Again, what this bill seeks to do would be an excellent aid in helping them throughout each year as they provide these fully volunteer services.

Lastly, this bill came as a surprise to me. I only came across it reviewing what bills were scheduled and open for providing testimony and I was humbled to see that someone had submitted this action. There are many water rescue, dive/rescue, and dive/recovery teams under government agencies in North Dakota and they too work tirelessly, often in volunteer status, and are ever so deserving of what this bill aims to do and provide.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee and express my support for this bill and for your continued commitment to working together to address items like this for North Dakotans but especially those that volunteer to do everything they can in service of their fellow human beings. I urge you to support HB 1336.

On behalf of our members,

Travis F. Bateman

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