

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 2183
Senate Appropriations – Education and Environment Committee
January 25, 2023 | 8:30 am

Chairman Sorvaag and Senate Appropriations – Education and Environment Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of SB 2183. My name is Dennis Nelson and I am the Highway Superintendent for Williams County.

Since the beginning of November, the Williston area in northwestern Williams County has received approximately 25 inches of snow and the Bismarck area has received more than double that amount (<https://www.weather.gov/wrh/climate?wfo=bis>). Not only did we get a lot of snow, we got a lot of snow early and fast. This incredible amount of snow has led to long hours of plowing, sanding, and hauling, which has also meant paying overtime and increased fuel costs.

SB 2183 would enable cities, townships, counties, and tribal entities to have an alternative means for reimbursing the costs that went above and beyond our normal snow removal budget amounts as well as help meet the needs for whatever weather is yet to come in the next few months. Not every roads budget is the same across the state, but usually spending more money for snow removal so early in the season can mean that funds are pulled from projects planned for that summer.

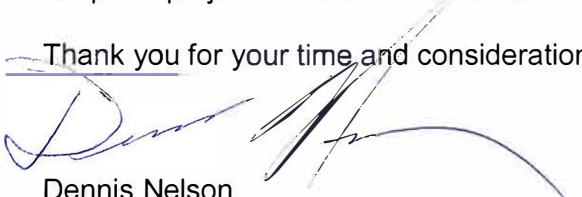
The reimbursable funds that this bill carries out would be especially beneficial for townships, which typically have very limited budgets that are specific to individual projects. Townships are not afforded the same diverse funding resources that cities and counties are, especially in the time of need – like when a winter storm hits – and expending dollars outside of their budget can be extremely financially burdensome. Plowing township roads is critical for oilfield and agricultural traffic to continue moving through the winter to bring their products to market and for our rural citizens to safely be able to travel to and from their homes. No one wants to be stranded on an unplowed road in town or in the country – it is dangerous for our citizens and our first responders alike.

My testimony is in support of this bill, but I do have two requests for possible amendments for your consideration:

1. If there are any remaining funds in the first section of this bill after all requests have been submitted, please consider rolling over the remaining funds to the second section of the bill. Political subdivisions and tribal entities would then have the opportunity to request the funds, second half of the winter season may pose an even greater need for snow removal.
2. A reduction in the 200% requirement would increase the ability to respond to the unpredictability of future winter storms and allow for more flexibility in reimbursement.

Approval of these funds for snow emergency costs will help us to keep our roads clear in the present and keep our projects on track in the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration,



Dennis Nelson
Williams County Highway Superintendent

Dennis Nelson, Highway Superintendent