

TESTIMONY OF

Colonel Brandon Solberg, Superintendent

Good morning Chairman Wanzek and members of the committee. My name is Brandon Solberg, and I serve as the superintendent of the North Dakota Highway Patrol. I am here to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1012.

The highway patrol and the department of transportation (DOT) have a long-standing partnership centered on a mutual mission to provide high quality services to our citizens while safely moving people and goods.

Although we support DOT's overall budget, I am here to discuss the importance of one of their requests for an additional 14 equipment operators for snow and ice control. An additional 14 equipment operators would have a tremendous and much needed impact on highway maintenance which directly benefits the motoring public. Controlling snow and ice and treating slippery roads is a service that our citizens expect during inclement weather.

Each winter storm is unique and presents its own set of challenges. Our commanders in the field are in constant communication with DOT district engineers discussing current conditions, and many road closure decisions are based on DOT's ability to keep a roadway passable.

Troopers drive SUVs and pickups and rely heavily on snowplow operators during treacherous storms. Plowing the roadway, providing road and weather updates, and escorting our patrol vehicles to emergency calls are just a few examples of the services that DOT operators provide, and we appreciate their courageous efforts. When these resources aren't available, our officers have an extremely difficult time serving the public and responding to calls.

An additional 14 equipment operators would help DOT extend their hours of service, especially during winter weather events. Winter storms are unpredictable, and long-duration storms can quickly tax existing resources. Traffic is moving 24 hours a day in our state, and DOT helps keep our roadways open for those who have legitimate transportation needs, including our state's first responders. Please fully support DOT's request for additional snowplow operators.

This concludes my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.