Testimony

To the

Senate Industry, Business, and Labor Committee

on

SB 2256

Good morning, Chairman Larsen and members of the committee. I am Aaron Johnson, and I work for Fargo Cass Public Health (FCPH) as an Environmental Health Practitioner and the onsite septic system inspection program lead. Fargo Cass Public Health serves as the regulatory agency for all septic systems in Cass, Richland, Sargent, and Traill counties, and provides septic system consulting in Ransom and Steele counties which do not have septic inspection programs. Prior to Fargo, I worked for 9 years as the septic system inspection lead for Custer Health in Mandan, which served 7 counties for onsite septic regulation.

FCPH employs two Environmental Health Practitioners (EHP) that conduct onsite septic system inspections for installation, repair, and evaluation of condition. We hold national credentialing as Registered Environmental Health Sanitarians through the National Environmental Health Association, as well as state credentialing in North Dakota as licensed Environmental Health Practitioners, and attend yearly continuing education through the University of Minnesota Onsite Sewage Treatment Program and in-state trainings to maintain these state and national credentials. In 2022 FCPH conducted 143 inspections which includes site evaluation, design, and install follow up. There were 26 contractor licenses in 2022.

My testimony today is in support of SB2256. Historically, local public health and the onsite septic installers have worked jointly to create both code and licensure policy that keeps costs low for installers and homeowners while still adhering to the scientific best practices required by regulators to have confidence in the code. The creation of a board with equal numbers of installers and local regulators continues this partnership, and allows it to grow under a statewide framework that expands regulatory requirements in a measured, even way, and avoids creating unfunded mandates in unregulated rural counties. The addition of a DEQ member to the board will provide needed insight from state regulators that have experience with larger systems, and allows for the input of North Dakota state departments into any program developments. Local public health is committed to working with the installers to complete the statewide onsite septic code and provide reciprocity of licensure between all health units.

Thank you for your time and attention on this important issue. Public health continues to be committed to improving onsite septic system regulations throughout North Dakota.

I would be happy to answer any questions.