Testimony

To the

Senate Industry, Business, and Labor Committee

on

SB 2256

Good morning, Chairman Larsen and members of the committee. I am Lisa Westman, Director of Environmental Health at First District Health Unit. First District provides local public health services to Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, McLean, Renville, Sheridan, and Ward counties. I have a staff of 6 Environmental Health Practitioners. One EHP coordinates our septic program and is trained to do site evaluations, inspect onsite septic systems for proper installation and/or repair, work with homeowners and contractors to develop septic plans, and to license septic contractors. He has competed several trainings with University of Minnesota Onsite Sewage Treatment Program, attended conferences for the National Onsite Wastewater Recycling Association, and regularly attends in state trainings and conferences to obtain continuing education credits for maintaining state EHP and national REHS credential. In 2022 we issued 162 permits which includes site evaluation, design, and system install follow up. We had 52 contractor licenses in 2022.

I am in support of SB2256. I had the privilege to serve on the Onsite Wastewater Technical Committee during the interim. The board should remain made up of 4 Public Health Environmental Health Practitioners and 4 installers with the addition of one Department of Environmental Quality representative. The addition of a DEQ member will assure there is coordination and input with the State regarding septic systems. It also assures that EHPs that have been trained in the science of septic systems provide their knowledge and expertise to the development of a statewide code. Local public health is committed to working with the installers to complete the statewide onsite septic code and provide reciprocity 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 the State.

I would be happy to answer any questions and my administrator, Lisa Clute, is also here that I may defer questions you may have to her.