To: North Dakota State Legislature and the Senate – State and Local Government Committee
Date: February 8, 2023
Re: SCR 4007

Senator Roers and committee members,

Hello Chairwoman Roers and committee members. My name is John Fulwider of Arnegard, North Dakota and I am submitting this letter IN FAVOR of SCR #4007.

I am a retired member of the McKenzie County Sheriff's Officer (1980-2014) and Sheriff of McKenzie County 2013-2014. During that time I also served as a member of the Williams County Dive Team and worked on several cases on the Missouri River.

Hunters and boaters far off from the beaten path and in that, far off from help of the usual means by ambulance or fire truck made these responses very challenging and dangerous. Resources have always been scarce, but we did our best to handle the calls for help.

The Badlands and waterways in our area are very popular for all types of outdoor recreation. Hunting, fishing, boating, camping, hiking, snowshoeing, off-roading, and mountain biking on the Maah Daah Hey Trail system of our public lands areas have always brought many challenges over the years when bad things happen. It is long, long overdue that steps be taken to identify what is needed in terms of training and equipping search and rescue teams in our state. It simply leaves responders wide open and at greater risk with not having the necessary information, regulation, training, knowledge, and equipment for search and rescue incidents as it currently stands. Fire, EMS, and law enforcement are simply not in position or organized to be of adequate capabilities, SAR must be established to fill the void that is and has been present for much too long.

Badlands SAR and the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of North Dakota deserves the passing of this study as they have spearheaded the efforts to bring SAR resources to our state and help sheriff's in their mandated requirement to oversee search and rescue incidents within their respective counties. Missing persons cases too are in need of review for initial response steps and a uniform method of what needs to take place in a short time when those calls are received. The way incidents and cases have been and currently are handled is one that creates a great deal of liability on agencies and puts a great deal of stress on the emergency response system as it is currently organized. When we send Fire and EMS out to conduct SAR calls that they aren't designed or equipped to handle, it leaves the rest of their districts uncovered as they can only respond with what they have and that is often times the vehicles designed for crash/rescue on our roadways (not off-road in remote areas) and medical calls within our communities. It also takes them out of service and unavailable for typical fire and medical calls for a much longer amount of time.

In conclusion, as a former leader of a law enforcement agency to the largest county in the state, I must respectfully request of you and the entire legislative assembly to approve this study and help these volunteers that are trying to help us bring this much needed skillset to all of us that live in, recreate in, and visit our wonderful state.

Thank you for your time and please vote GREEN on SCR #4007,

John L. Fulwider
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Arnegard, North Dakota
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