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Senate Transportation Committee
68th Legislative Assembly
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Testimony in Support of HB 1336

Honorable Members of the North Dakota Senate Transportation Committee:

My name is Sean Johnson, and I testify as a private citizen in support of HB 1336. This bill would extend the availability of special license plates for volunteer first responders to volunteer search and rescue (SAR) professionals. I have been a member of a volunteer search and rescue organization since 1997 and served in several SAR capacities including ground search team member, aircrew search observer, safety officer; and in mission staff capacities up to and including incident commander.

I can personally attest to the dedication and selfless service of these volunteer responders, many of whom are unpaid. They live up to the motto of search and rescue every day in their service to their state and communities, applying their talents so “that others may live”. While we can never fully repay these SAR volunteers for the work they do to find the lost, reunite them with their loved ones, and bring closure to families through the dignified recovery of remains; extending the availability of these special license plates is both an appropriate and fitting recognition for their service.

Search and rescue covers many domains and contains many specialties. The National Search and Rescue plan the addresses aeronautical, water, land (rural), and urban SAR domains. Often these domains work as one in wide area searches and catastrophic search and rescue events. A common denominator is the presence and participation of volunteers, who work seamlessly alongside career and volunteer responders from other disciplines during emergencies.

With this in mind, Section 1 currently defines “Volunteer search and rescue personnel” to *include* water and dive rescue personnel. An amendment had been proposed in the House striking the words “includes water and dive rescue personnel and” from page 1 lines 20 and 21 to clarify that this bill not only includes water and dive rescue personnel, but other equally dedicated SAR volunteer professionals. The House felt the language as written was inclusive of all SAR volunteers. It is my hope your committee also sees it this way, and that such Legislative intent will be made clear to the Department of Transportation if this bill becomes law. If for some reason you feel the bill requires further clarification to ensure all SAR volunteers are included, I would propose the language above for your consideration as an amendment.

In closing, I fully support HB 1336 and encourage a do pass recommendation from this committee. Thank you for your consideration.

Very Respectfully,



Sean M. Johnson