

Written Testimony of Terri Zimmerman
North Dakota Senate Transportation Committee
March 23, 2023

Chairman Clemens, Vice Chairman Fors, and members of the Senate Transportation Committee. I am Terri Zimmerman, CEO of Packet Digital and Botlink, two companies developing and manufacturing drone batteries and software right here in North Dakota.

I was born and raised on a farm outside of Hannah, ND, graduated from the University of North Dakota, and have worked in the technology sector in North Dakota for over 25 years. I was the CFO and Vice President of Operations of Great Plains Software during their rapid growth and expansion and became the CEO of Packet Digital in 2013, which then acquired a controlling stake in Botlink in 2015. Additionally, I was appointed to a state economic development board by several Governors of North Dakota and served for 17 years, and have been chair of The Research Institute for Autonomous Systems at the University of North Dakota since 2017. I am a proud North Dakotan and have been a strong advocate for our state's technology sector.

I offer my testimony today strongly in support of HB 1519. I have had the opportunity to work with both commercial and government drone customers across the United States for over a decade, and have watched the industry grow from an idea to a reality. I have seen the considerable impact that state and local government funding can have on new and emerging markets, and how that funding can kickstart technology adoption across different market sectors that may have been resistant before. This proposed funding will lead to drone technology adoption across the state at agencies and organizations that otherwise would be unable to use this powerful technology.

It's my belief that North Dakota is a leader in UAS technology in the US, but to maintain that position it's important for the state to invest money towards new sectors that can highlight the utility of drones in its citizens' day-to-day lives.

HB 1519 funding will allow drone technology to be showcased across the entire state, bringing more North Dakotan citizens into the drone industry, and continuing a forward momentum of leading the country in drone technology.

Sincerely,

Terri Zimmerman, CEO of Packet Digital and Botlink