

**TESTIMONY OF
DARIN T. HANSON
NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES
BEFORE THE
HOUSE AND GOVERNMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
1/10/2025
IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1079**

Chairman Schauer, Vice Chairman Satrom, and members of the House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today to talk about our support of House Bill 1079. For the record, I am Darin Hanson, Director of Homeland Security within the Department of Emergency Services. Today, I am asking for your support of HB Bill 1079 which will rename both the division of Homeland Security and the division of State Radio within the Department of Emergency Services.

The current names of the divisions are not indicative of the nature of our work and don't accurately set expectations for stakeholders, as proven time and again by the variety of questions we field. This bill proposes that Homeland Security be renamed to Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and for State Radio to be renamed to Emergency Communications Center.

Homeland Security and Emergency Management, or HSEM, is among the common naming conventions across states, including 10 states or territories. The inclusion of Emergency Management in our title gives much greater indication of the work that we do. Of the 41 authorized FTEs and 16 temporary employees, 54 work primarily within emergency management functions. One of the problems that this bill attempts to address is the confusion that many stakeholders have regarding the division. The agency receives many calls regarding border missions, immigration problems, and foreign activity in the state; however, NDCC provides minimal authority or direction for providing what is viewed by many as "homeland security." In addition, there is a risk of confusion for those seeking assistance before and after a natural disaster as they are not likely to correlate "homeland security" with disaster assistance.

There are reasons to keep a reference to homeland security as part of the division's name. The agency is the state administrative agency for federal homeland security grants, the designated state agency for coordinating federal homeland security clearances, a primary partner for the federal Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and Office of Intelligence Analysis, and several other DHS designated roles.

Emergency Communications Center is a common naming convention that jurisdictions at all levels are using to replace the previous term 'Dispatch Centers.' This naming convention is in conjunction with the efforts, both Federal and State, to reclassify dispatchers as first responders. The name 'State Radio' was reflective of the only function served at the time. Now along with emergency radio traffic, Emergency Communication Centers utilize a portfolio of technologies.

Bill 1079 simply renames all references of the two divisions within Century Code to the new, more indicative naming conventions. It will help stakeholders better find the right resources when they need them, reduce misunderstandings, and position dispatchers for future classification changes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here and for your consideration of moving this bill forward. I am happy to stand for questions.