



BILLINGS COUNTY

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Testimony in Support of HB 1419 – North Dakota House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kyle Michels, and I serve as the EMS Director for Billings County. I come before you today to strongly support House Bill 1419, which would include Emergency Services Workers in the North Dakota Public Employee Retirement System's Public Safety Plan. This is a critical step in ensuring the safety, well-being, and fair treatment of those who dedicate their lives to the health and safety of our communities.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel, like their counterparts in fire, law enforcement, and corrections, face the unique and often life-threatening challenges of responding to emergencies. From medical crises and accidents to natural disasters and mass casualty events, we are there to answer the call. Our first responders—EMTs, paramedics, and dispatchers—are frequently exposed to high-stress situations, physical and emotional trauma, and long hours away from their families and loved ones. Yet, despite the nature of the work and the sacrifices made, EMS workers are not currently included in the Public Safety Plan under the North Dakota Public Employee Retirement System (NDPERS).

The intent of this bill is simple but profound: it seeks to provide fairness and recognition for the physical and mental demands placed on EMS professionals. We are asking that our contributions to public safety be acknowledged in the same way as those of our brothers and sisters in law enforcement, fire, and corrections. Emergency Services Workers are first on the scene, and like the other public safety professionals, we risk our health, our safety, and in some cases, our lives, to serve our communities.

I urge you to consider the long-term benefits of including EMS in the Public Safety Plan. First and foremost, this plan will ensure that EMS workers are able to retire with dignity after a lifetime of service. It will also attract new recruits to our profession, where there is a critical shortage across the state. When EMS personnel know their service is valued and that their future security is ensured, it strengthens the entire system of public safety.

As it stands, EMS professionals face challenges both on the job and in terms of compensation and retirement security. Adding EMS to the Public Safety Plan will not only recognize the hard work we do, but will also help us recruit and retain the talent needed to keep North Dakota's communities safe.

I have seen firsthand the dedication of EMS workers in our county and throughout the state. We work alongside our law enforcement, fire, and dispatch teams every day, and our role is just as vital. It is time for us to be treated with the same respect and consideration.

I ask for your support of HB 1419 to ensure that EMS professionals, who serve North Dakota with unwavering commitment, are given the recognition and security they deserve. Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your support of this important bill and I will stand for any questions.

Sincerely,

Kyle Michels, NRP
EMS Director, Billings County