



TO: NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATURE-69<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE SESSION

RE: **TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF HOUSE BILL 1433**

1/21/2025

Chairman Ruby and committee members,

Good morning, my name is Travis Bateman and I am here representing the Badlands Search & Rescue Service along with the Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of North Dakota. I am here before you today in favor of House Bill 1433 with the legislative lingo of a “friendly amendment” for Section 1 where it lists several positions titles as a work group (a-f). We would like to ask that you consider placing an additional position (g), to include a representative of an organization that specializes in search and rescue procedures and implementation of hasty search tactics for missing persons. For this bill that would specifically be for the lost person category of those with dementia.

This is a truly exciting piece of legislation and at this point in time we are unaware of any other state that is even looking at this topic to further aid the ever present conditions amongst our senior community involving dementia and Alzheimer’s.

North Dakota is no stranger to missing persons that have gone missing due to the primary factor of suffering from dementia. They’re often functioning and doing fine by all accounts while slowly declining in certain areas. I had a grandmother that suffered from this condition and saw the decline first hand. It then came abundantly clear when calling home while I was in the service that something was very wrong and a phone call to my mom confirmed my fears. Fortunately, we caught it in time and took necessary steps to safeguard her from the risk of wandering. My mom even took preemptive steps to hide her car keys and disconnect the car battery as she had began talking about places long gone but ever present in her memories.

There are many stories out there of similar circumstances ending in tragedy. I know of four in North Dakota. Three that ended in fatal tragedies. All three in the winter. All three male, in the winter, that ended up stuck in the snow or mud of a section line or a slough. Two succumbed to the elements and the third was trapped in the vehicle in deep snow and spunt the wheels so long that the tires eventually caught fire and engulfed the vehicle. The fourth is that of Lloyd Liken from Bismarck. Lloyd was one of those that functioned well enough that his developing condition went undetected as to how bad it

was until it was too late and he was already missing and mobile. That was late November of 2023. We searched for him across North Dakota from the Canadian border to South Dakota. We used civilian volunteers that drove just under 17,000 miles of roads, trails, and rural areas. There was even a total of seven civilian aircraft at one time that searched for him. To add to the three government planes that were employed over two days early on.

This bill would provide for a proactive approach to this challenging issue. I speak only to the worst case scenarios of this condition when they wander and their location is unknown for an extended amount of time, there is a delay in the discovery that they are missing, and a search is implemented. To take proactive steps in safeguarding them early on, before they are missing is achievable. That is something that needs to be included in this as well as developing proper search procedures for them, for all involved to be familiar with, and other tools that can be used. There is tracking technology available and other unintrusive aids unless absolutely necessary. Many of them, like most of us, value their privacy, so that is something that needs to be included. The end goal is to have that “in case of emergency, break glass” type of readiness and knowledge that we would be able to offer and help guide.

Please give HB 1433 a Do Pass and make North Dakota the leader in helping to remedy as much of this issue and all of the challenges that come with it as possible so that we can better safeguard our elders when this awful condition changes their lives forever.

Thank you and I'll stand for any questions that you may have.

Respectfully,

*Travis F. Bateman*

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