

Chairman Ruby and other committee members:

My name is Art Hagebock. I own four newspapers in southeast North Dakota. I recently retired after fifteen years as the Fire Chief in LaMoure. I also am an EMR and serve on the ambulance service in LaMoure.

When I retired, we had thirteen firemen that were EMR's. What these firemen bring to the table is having firemen with basic medical training at a scene such as a car accident that can help victims until the scene is safe for more advanced medical personnel. The training for these firemen were done in-house by a very talented and knowledgeable instructor Kelli Just. She has been instructing for many years and does a great job. We all know what it takes to be a volunteer fireman and the struggles it is to keep a full roster of qualified individuals. Every fireman on our department is strictly a volunteer and we do not get paid one penny to be on the department. These men need to be trained in water rescue, ice rescue, auto extrication, high angle rescue, heavy rescue, wildland fire, structure fire, hazardous materials, grain bin rescue, radio communication, scene size up along with trying to keep those skills to the highest possible level.

This bill will allow us to keep our training in-house. I cannot see any of our firemen traveling to get this basic medical training done. This will only affect any person that could use this type of help.

This issue came up a couple of years ago and was defeated in the legislature. The interim committee brought back the issue and put it in place through administrative rule. If this is how policy is done, defeated in the legislature but passed through administrative rule, why am I paying this group to be here when everything can be ran by non-elected officials.

I had a conversation with Mr. Price when this first was introduced a couple of years ago. My only question I wanted answered is, "If this would have been implemented ten or twenty years ago, how many lives would we have saved?" His answer to me was that he did not have anything documented but he wanted to do this to keep better track of the training.

This bill along with the others here keep making a complete circle to just a couple of businesses and individuals who stand to gain financially from this without any regard for common sense or thinking about the struggles of not just EMS but also the fire side of things.

Thank you for your time and support of all the volunteer fire departments in the state.