Testimony on HB 1099
January 13, 2025
Submitted by Amy Phillips (Fargo resident)

Chairman Klemin and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

I am submitting this testimony in support of HB 1099.

I have worked as a primary, special, and general election judge in Fargo for the past three years. In the recent November 2024 General Election, I served as an election judge at the Cass County Courthouse in Fargo for the entire early-voting and election-day period. For the first time as a poll worker, I had to assist individual voters who had trouble finding a candidate's name on the ballot. In all cases, it had to do with a presidential candidate. One of these voters was an elderly gentleman who asked me to assist him and said to me several times "I can't find her name." I asked him a few questions until it was clear he was trying to find Kamala Harris' name. He knew her by "Kamala," not Harris. Two other voters who appeared to be new citizens also had difficulty finding "Kamala's" name on the ballot (they knew her first name but not her last). While three voters are a small sample size, it made me wonder how many other voters, at the courthouse or elsewhere, were confused by the "Harris" name on the ballot.

When a presidential candidate is well known by a last name, such as "Trump," but another presidential candidate is well known by a first name, such as "Kamala," the current North Dakota law requiring only the presidential candidate's surname obviously privileges the candidate with the well-known last name. The current law could also be confusing if two or more presidential candidates had the same last name. Ensuring that the ballot offers all candidates' first and last names will eliminate voter confusion and inadvertent state privileging of candidates.

I want to thank Representative Conmy for sponsoring this bill, and I thank the Judiciary Committee for its attention to my testimony. **I urge the Committee to give HB 1099 a Do Pass recommendation.**