

House Bill 1579

Presented by: Sheri Haugen-Hoffart, Commissioner
Public Service Commission

Before: House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Honorable Todd Porter, Chair

Date: January 31, 2025

TESTIMONY

Chairman Porter, members of the House Energy and Natural Resources, I am Public Service Commissioner Sheri Haugen-Hoffart here to testify in opposition to HB 1579, both as introduced and with the amendments provided today.

As a public service commissioner, consumer protection is a responsibility I take very seriously. It is the center of both my and my fellow commissioners' work every day. Despite our shared commitment to consumer protection, we've come to a different conclusion on this bill.

I do care about congestion, so why do I oppose this bill?

First, my experience tells me North Dakota is fair, open and has a predictable process. We need to be very careful not to amend law that is confusing or could become complicated. When reading this bill, I am unclear what the process would look like and fear delays for large-load growth due to inquiries (or protests) due to potential impacts. What this legislation would do is

give the Commission veto power over the development of large loads in North Dakota.

Second, my philosophical approach is that the executive branch authority should not be expanded unless there is compelling reason and that expanded authority will provide a realistic solution. Here, the solution is lacking.

Third, as a regulator, I believe we experienced an one-off situation, as nothing shows we have a systematic problem that needs to be fixed.

We have worked hard as a state to communicate that we are open for business, and this is not a message we want to send. It does nothing to ensure that customers won't be affected by congestion. It is a regulatory expansion that provides no realistic benefits to the customers.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your time and I am available for questions.