

Testimony prepared for:  
**House Political Subdivisions**  
Donnell Preskey, NDACo  
January 23, 2025



**Re: HB 1193 – Law Enforcement Appreciation Grants**

Chair Longmuir & committee members, I'm Donnell Preskey with North Dakota Association of Counties. In that role, I also serve as executive director of the ND Sheriffs' & Deputies Association (NDSDA). NDSDA stands in support of HB 1193 and asks for your favorable consideration to the important piece of legislation.

At the local level, it is a struggle to recruit and retain law enforcement officers. From conversations with our county Sheriffs across our state, it is a constant battle to fill openings. Sheriffs along with their commissioners do as much as they can to provide competitive salaries and benefits to retain local deputies, but it is very difficult to match state salary and benefits and to neighboring state law enforcement officers.

Anything the state can do to help our counties retain their trained deputies is much appreciated. HB 1193 mirrors an action the Legislature approved in the 2023 Session, with a few differences. HB 1193 is focused on those who have been with the same agency or department for four years or more and includes state law enforcement and corrections.

HB 1307, otherwise known as the Back the Blue Grants, was introduced as being a \$5 million grant and was passed at \$3.5 million distributed to cities and counties for recruitment, retention and training for local law enforcement and local correctional officers. Of the amount, \$750,000 was earmarked for agencies with less than 10 officers. This equated to law enforcement in those smaller agencies receiving \$2,885 per officer and \$1,419 per officer for all other agencies. The intent was for the Sheriff or Chief of Police to have the discretion on how to use those funds and to decide how to distribute to officers.

Based on information from the North Dakota Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Board in 2023, there are 1,750 licensed officers employed by city and county agencies. The funds were distributed to 1,260 county employees (735 licensed officers and 525 correctional officers).

Sheriffs are very appreciative of the Back the Blue Grant dollars they received and say they have been beneficial in helping with retention. Some departments used the funds for a recruitment campaign, but most Sheriffs decided to distribute the dollars as a retention bonus soon after they received the funding in late 2023 right before the holidays. Sheriffs have also provided feedback that the Back the Blue grant came at the right time to help boost the morale of law enforcement, sending a message that the State recognizes and appreciates the work our deputies and officers are doing to keep your local communities safe.