

Chairman Longmuir and members of the House Political Subs Committee,

My name is Kathy Frelich, and I have the honor of representing District 15 which includes Devils Lake and also encompasses the area north to the Canadian border.

House Bill 1197 is a Bill to allow for grants relating to jail improvements. Section 1 describes the funding avenue, seeking an appropriation for a Jail improvement fund which will be placed in the State treasury. The funds are appropriated on a continuing basis for the purpose of jail facility improvements. Section 2 describes how a committee is formed to determine the grant recipients. The Committee consists of members of both the House and Senate, the Association of Counties, the Sheriff's Association, the Chiefs of Police Association, and one member from DOCR. Section 3 describes the grant criteria which includes the need for facility improvement, remodeling and replacement projects. A grant may be awarded to a county if the county agrees to provide local funding of at least twenty-five percent of the project costs, and the last line ensures that at least 25% of these funds are geared to counties with populations less than 15,000. Section 4 indicates the funds are to be derived from the Strategic Investment and Improvement Fund. The total appropriation is for \$50,000,000.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I know this is a big ask, but there is also a big need. Earlier this month we learned during the Governor's address that North Dakota has had an influx of people, and this means a need for increased infrastructure. Yes, there are a lot of needs, and we are looking at increased housing, mental health services, workforce development and childcare, but unfortunately our local communities are also in need of jail space.

If you will recall back to the last Session, you might remember there was a Tough on Crime Bill introduced. And like many of you, we heard back from our communities that the infrastructure was not in place to manage an increased number of incarcerated individuals. This Bill will head us in the right direction.

Also, you are aware this legislature is trying to figure out a way to lessen the burden of property tax. I consider this grant proposal to be a burden taken off the back of the taxpayer. It is difficult enough to ask citizens to increase their property tax for the building of schools, but it is nearly impossible to ask them to prioritize jails. And yet, they are an essential need for our communities to improve safety. Not only will this infrastructure grant improve the safety of our communities, it will also improve the safety of those working in the jail. This improved safety will likely increase the workforce in these facilities. We must keep our jails safe for both our inmates and those working alongside them.

I know you will hear more testimony after me, but I will stand for questions.

Kathy Frelich

District 15