

House Political Subdivision

Date 1/22/2025.

Testimony on House Bill 1311

Submitted by: Ken Wangen Fire Chief Carrington Fire Department

Chairman Longmuir and House Political Subdivision Committee members,

My name is Ken Wangen Chief of the Carrington Volunteer Fire Department and the current President of the North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association.

The last couple of years have exposed a lot of issues for the Rural Emergency Services. We are losing both Fire Departments and Ambulance services at an alarming rate.

Studying and finding solutions that would help recruit and retain volunteers makes a lot of sense. With the loss of services, it often puts more strain on the remaining surrounding services with no hope of increasing personnel or even funding to cover the added expense of larger response areas. This issue then leads to losses of personnel to the surviving services due to burnout. To also compounded the issue surviving services may have gaps in personnel during days or even seasons (springs work and harvest come to mind) and end up relying on surrounding services to also respond. The services that are able provide this without question but is still leads back to the issue mentioned before.

A comprehensive study is warranted and very much needed. While it may or may not be a funding related issue, I do believe it is a combination of personal time, expense, and frankly dwindling population.

Without a study we essentially will be status quo, which will mean continued loss of Emergency Service in areas we simply cannot afford to not have coverage.

Thank you for taking the time to review this testimony. And I ask you pass HB 1311 and help all Emergency Services try and find a solution.

Ken Wangen

Fire Chief Carrington Fire Department