



**North Dakota Grain Growers Association  
Testimony in Opposition to HB 1614  
House Transportation Committee  
February 13, 2025**

Chairman Ruby, Members of the House Transportation Committee, for the record my name is Dan Wogsland representing the North Dakota Grain Growers Association (NDGGA). NDGGA appears before you today in opposition to HB 1614.

HB 1614, while seemingly prioritizing safety, stifles innovation and imposes unnecessary restrictions on the development and deployment of autonomous trucking technology in North Dakota. It effectively prevents the state from realizing the potential benefits of this technology, including increased safety, improved fuel efficiency, and reduced transportation costs.

**Specific Points of Opposition:**

\* **Premature Regulation:** The technology for automated truck tractors is still under development. Imposing strict operational requirements at this stage is premature and could stifle research and development within the state. It's more appropriate to establish performance-based standards and regulations as the technology matures and its capabilities are better understood.

\* **Unnecessary Human Presence Requirement:** The requirement for a human driver to be physically present and able to take control defeats the purpose of autonomous trucking. The primary benefits of this technology stem from the potential to reduce human error, which is a major contributing factor to accidents. Mandating a human driver undermines this core safety advantage. Furthermore, it limits the potential for efficiency gains, as it still requires a driver's salary and associated costs.

\* **Competitive Disadvantage:** By imposing these restrictions, North Dakota risks creating a less attractive environment for companies developing and testing autonomous trucking technology. This could lead to businesses choosing to operate and invest in other states with more forward-thinking regulatory frameworks, thereby hindering economic growth and job creation in North Dakota.

\* **Safety Concerns Addressed by Technology:** While safety is a valid concern, autonomous driving systems are designed with multiple layers of redundancy and fail-safe mechanisms to mitigate risks. Rigorous testing and validation processes are already in place to ensure the safety of these systems before they are deployed on public roads. The presence of a human driver does not guarantee safety and, in some cases, could even introduce new risks due to fatigue or distraction.

\* **Focus on Performance-Based Standards:** Instead of mandating a human driver, North Dakota should focus on developing performance-based standards for autonomous trucking systems. This approach allows for flexibility and innovation while ensuring that these systems meet rigorous safety requirements. These standards could address specific aspects of autonomous driving, such as object detection, navigation, and emergency response.

\* **Economic Impact:** The bill ignores the potential economic benefits of autonomous trucking, such as reduced transportation costs, increased efficiency, and improved supply chain logistics. These benefits could be particularly significant for North Dakota's agricultural and energy industries, which rely heavily on trucking for transportation.

\* **Data-Driven Approach:** Regulations should be based on data and evidence, not on speculation and fear. As more data becomes available on the safety and performance of autonomous trucking systems, regulations can be adjusted accordingly. A more flexible and adaptive regulatory approach is needed to keep pace with technological advancements.

#### **Conclusion:**

House Bill No. 1614, in its current form, is not a sound approach to regulating autonomous trucking technology. It is premature, unnecessarily restrictive, and could put North Dakota at a competitive disadvantage. Therefore Chairman Ruby, Members of the House Transportation Committee, NDGGA would respectfully request a Do Not Pass recommendation for HB 1614 and would hope the full House would concur.