

2025 SB 2018
Senate Appropriations Government Operations Division
Senator Terry Wanzek, Chairman
January 15, 2025

Testimony of Charles P. Clairmont
Executive Director, North Dakota Safety Council

Chairman Wanzek, members of the Senate Appropriations Government Operations Division, my name is Charles P. Clairmont, and I serve as the Executive Director of the North Dakota Safety Council (NDSC). I appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of SB 2018 and to highlight the vital role of workforce and community safety in supporting economic growth and protecting North Dakotans.

The NDSC has been serving our state since 1942 as a private nonprofit organization dedicated to making North Dakota the safest state in the nation. In the last two years, we provided safety training to more than 50,000 individuals across industries, schools, and communities, delivering over 300 consultations to improve workplace safety and prevent injuries and fatalities.

We are seeking \$1.5 million in funding to expand our workforce safety training programs across the state. These funds will address critical safety challenges that are costing lives and driving up workers' compensation costs for businesses.

Key Safety Challenges in North Dakota

1. Transportation Fatalities:

- **Issue:** Transportation-related incidents remain the leading cause of workplace deaths in North Dakota, accounting for 12 of 26 workplace fatalities in 2023 (source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)). Our state's fatality rate is 9.0 per 100,000 full-time equivalent workers—nearly three times higher than the national average of 3.5 per 100,000 workers (source: [BLS Injury Report](#)).
- **NDSC Solution:** We offer **Fleet Essentials** driver training to address the training gap for non-CDL drivers and provide risk-reduction resources to businesses. Our **Alive at 25** program equips young drivers with defensive driving skills, helping to lower crash rates among new drivers.

2. Falls and Construction Safety:

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- **Issue:** Falls from heights are a leading cause of fatalities in the construction industry, with six construction-related deaths recorded in North Dakota in 2023 (source: [OSHA National Data](#)).
- **NDSC Solution:** Our **Fall Protection Lab** offers hands-on training to workers on proper equipment use and safety procedures. Our **Slip Simulator** at the main facility trains participants to recognize hazards and improve their reaction times to avoid injuries caused by slips and trips.

3. Trenching and Excavation Hazards:

- **Issue:** OSHA's Denver Region, which includes North Dakota, has an emphasis program targeting trench collapses due to rising fatalities. Trench collapses are one of the deadliest incidents in construction, with a high likelihood of resulting in fatalities.
- **NDSC Solution:** We provide comprehensive trench safety training, especially for small and mid-sized contractors that often lack the resources to implement robust training programs.

4. Agricultural Safety:

- **Issue:** Agriculture is one of the most hazardous industries in North Dakota, accounting for nearly 50% of workplace fatalities in 2020 and 30% of the state's workplace fatalities in 2022 (source: [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)). With heavy machinery, confined spaces, and grain-handling equipment, rural workers face significant risks.
- **NDSC Solution:** Our **Ag Safety Training Trailer** travels across the state, delivering lifesaving demonstrations to schools, trade shows, county fairs, and co-ops. These sessions teach farm families and workers how to avoid entrapment in grain bins, safely operate machinery, and respond to farm-related emergencies.

5. Industrial Hygiene and Hazardous Exposures:

- **Issue:** Hazardous exposures remain a growing concern in industries such as manufacturing, construction, and oil and gas. Seven North Dakota workers died from harmful substance exposure in 2023 (source: [BLS Report](#)).

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- **NDSC Solution:** We have expanded our **Industrial Hygiene Program** to include noise assessments, air quality sampling, and workplace exposure evaluations. Our industrial hygiene experts conduct thorough audits to identify hazards and recommend practical solutions to reduce risks, ensuring compliance with regulatory standards and improving overall worker safety.

6. Substance Use and Mental Health:

- **Issue:** The opioid crisis and rising mental health challenges have reached North Dakota's workplaces. The state averages 2.8 unintentional overdose deaths per week, and mental health-related workplace issues, including absenteeism and crises, are increasing statewide (source: [CDC Opioid Report](#)).
- **NDSC Solution:** Our **Respond Ready Workplace** program equips employers and employees with the tools and knowledge to respond effectively to opioid overdoses, including the distribution and use of naloxone kits. Additionally, our **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)** training teaches organizations to recognize early signs of mental health challenges and implement preventive support, reducing stigma and fostering a safer, more responsive work environment.

Why Invest in the North Dakota Safety Council?

1. **Proven Track Record:** We have decades of experience working across a wide range of industries, including agriculture, construction, oil and gas, transportation, and manufacturing. Our ability to adapt our services to meet the unique safety challenges of each sector has made us a trusted partner for hundreds of organizations statewide.
2. **Comprehensive Safety Services:** Our programs cover the full spectrum of safety needs—from compliance and regulatory training to workplace consultations, safety program development, and leadership coaching. Whether it's teaching defensive driving to new teen drivers, helping a small business build a safety management plan, or providing advanced trench safety training, we cover "soup to nuts" when it comes to workplace safety.
3. **Highly Experienced Safety Consultants:**
Our team of safety consultants is one of the greatest assets of the NDSC. Our consultants are not only highly trained but also bring decades of real-world experience across a variety of high-risk industries, including oil and gas, agriculture, construction, and healthcare.

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4. **Community Safety Program:**

The NDSC's **Community Safety Program** is one of the most comprehensive in the state, aimed at equipping individuals, families, schools, and organizations with lifesaving skills to respond to emergencies and make safe decisions.

o **Key Initiatives:**

- **Active Threat Response Training:** Helps schools, businesses, and community organizations prepare for and respond to active threats with confidence.
- **School Emergency Response Planning:** Supports schools across the state in developing and testing emergency protocols.
- **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA):** Provides community members and organizations with the knowledge to support individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis.
- **Responsible Beverage Server (RBS) Program:** Trains bartenders, servers, and business owners on the legal responsibilities and best practices for preventing alcohol-related incidents, helping to keep communities safer.

5. **Partnerships with State Agencies and Associations:**

We work closely with key North Dakota agencies, including Workforce Safety and Insurance (WSI), the Department of Transportation, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the Department of Health and Human Services, the ND Petroleum Council, the Associated General Contractors of ND and local emergency response teams, to provide safety solutions tailored to the needs of North Dakota's workforce and communities.

6. **Rural and Statewide Reach:**

Our mobile training solutions, such as the **Ag Safety Training Trailer** and our **Fire Extinguisher Simulator**, enable us to bring safety education directly to rural communities, schools, and businesses that may not have the ability to attend training at centralized locations.

By investing in NDSC, you are supporting a proven organization that not only provides compliance-based training but also offers proactive consultations, leadership development, and community safety initiatives that address specific hazards and save lives.

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Conclusion

The \$1.5 million we are requesting represents a vital investment in the safety and productivity of North Dakota's workforce and communities. Our comprehensive approach to safety—including workforce training, school emergency preparedness, and community safety programs—ensures that North Dakotans are equipped to respond to any challenge they may face. Preventable injuries and fatalities not only cost lives but also strain families, businesses, and our economy. With this funding, the NDSC can enhance its training, consultations, and outreach programs to create safer workplaces and communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your questions and the opportunity to collaborate to make North Dakota the safest state in the nation.

Sincerely,



Charles P. Clairmont - Executive Director
North Dakota Safety Council

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