



January 27th, 2025

North Dakota Insurance Commissioner's Office
North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office

RE: Support for SB-2340

Chairman and Committee Members

I am Dr. Matthew J. Clark, the City of Williston's fire chief. On behalf of the Williston Fire Department and the City of Williston, I extend our strong support for Senate Bill 2340, which proposes a comprehensive study to evaluate and address the evolving fire service operational and response needs within the state of North Dakota.

As outlined in SB 2340, the proposed legislative management study is essential for ensuring that the state's fire service infrastructure is equipped to meet the demands of modern emergency response. Specifically, the focus on improving coordination, creating regional response teams, and standardizing training reflects an understanding of the complex challenges faced by fire departments across North Dakota.

In Williston, we are acutely aware of the increasing demands on our fire service as we address the needs of a growing population, evolving risks, and limited resources. The growth of our community, driven in large part by the expansion of the oil and gas industries, has significantly increased the demand for emergency services. Additionally, our region is routinely impacted by severe storms and experiences elevated emergency call volumes, further underscoring the need for a comprehensive evaluation of fire service capabilities. The proposed study's emphasis on evaluating staffing, training, equipment, and structural needs is crucial for enhancing our ability to protect lives and property effectively.

Additionally, the exploration of alternative funding mechanisms, as detailed in SB 2340, could significantly reduce reliance on local property taxes, creating a more equitable and sustainable financial model for fire services statewide.

The collaborative approach outlined in the bill, which includes consultation with key stakeholders such as the North Dakota Firefighter's Association, the North Dakota Fire Chief's Association, and other relevant entities, ensures that the study will benefit from the collective expertise and insights of the fire service community. We believe this collaborative framework will yield actionable recommendations that align with the realities and needs of fire departments throughout the state.

Furthermore, the consideration of wildland-urban interface fire prevention codes and emergency response operational initiatives directly addresses the unique challenges posed by North Dakota's diverse landscape. These efforts are critical for safeguarding our communities and ensuring resilience in the face of natural and human-made emergencies.

The Williston Fire Department and the City of Williston are committed to supporting initiatives that strengthen North Dakota's fire service capabilities and enhance the safety and well-being of our residents. We stand ready to contribute to this important study and collaborate with state leaders to implement its recommendations.

We urge you to advance SB 2340 and prioritize the vital work it seeks to accomplish. Together, we can build a stronger, more responsive fire service that meets the needs of all North Dakotans.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to public safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Clark', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr. Matthew J. Clark

Fire Chief, Williston Fire Department