



**Senate Bill 2340 Testimony: In Favor – DO PASS**  
**January 31, 2025 | 9:00 am | Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee**

Chairman Patten and Committee Members,

I am Mike Smith, the Director of Emergency Management for Williams County, on behalf of Williams County Emergency Management, I express my strong support for Senate Bill 2340. This bill proposes a legislative management study to evaluate and improve fire service operational and response needs in North Dakota. This legislation represents an essential step forward in addressing the critical challenges we face as a county situated at the heart of the Bakken oil and gas industry.

Williams County continues to experience an increased demand for all-hazards emergency response due to several converging factors. The high-volume transportation of hazardous materials, driven by the oil and gas sector, poses significant risks to public safety and necessitates a well-prepared and coordinated response framework. Furthermore, the region's population growth, coupled with natural weather events like wildfires and severe storms, places additional strain on our emergency response systems and the rural and city fire services that operate in Williams County.

SB2340's emphasis on studying fire service coordination, training, and resource mobilization directly aligns with the needs of Williams County. Specifically:

1. **Addressing Increased Calls for Service:** The volume of emergency response calls in Williams County has risen significantly due to industrial activity and population growth. A regional response model, as proposed in SB 2340, would ensure a more efficient allocation of resources to handle these demands.
2. **Managing Hazardous Materials and Industrial Risks:** The Bakken region's reliance on the transport and storage of hazardous materials heightens the importance of specialized training and a unified response framework. By establishing authority for standardized training and operational protocols, SB 2340 will help improve preparedness and safety for responders and the community.
3. **Adapting to Natural and Human-Caused Disasters:** From wildfires to extreme weather events, the county regularly faces emergencies that require coordinated efforts across multiple jurisdictions. SB 2340's focus on evaluating staffing abilities, training needs, and resource distribution is crucial for building resilience to these challenges.
4. **Supporting Volunteer Firefighters and Retention:** Our volunteer fire service faces recruitment and retention challenges, which further exacerbates response difficulties. The study's evaluation of fiscal support mechanisms and minimum training requirements will aid in sustaining this vital workforce and enhancing their capabilities.

I commend the bill's inclusive approach, which seeks input from stakeholders such as the State Fire Marshal, the North Dakota Firefighters Association, and the Department of Emergency Services. Collaboration between these entities is essential to create a cohesive and effective response model for North Dakota's diverse needs.

In closing, I urge the members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to support SB 2340. This study will not only benefit Williams County, but also strengthen the state's capacity to protect lives, property, and resources in the face of growing challenges.

Thank you for considering my perspective. I would be happy to provide further input or collaborate on this initiative as needed.

Sincerely, 

Michael W. Smith, CEM, Director of Emergency Management  
Williams County, North Dakota

**Michael W. Smith, CEM | Director, Emergency Management**

PO Box 2047 | 3429 4<sup>th</sup> Ave W | Williston, ND 58802-2047 | Office 701.577.7707 | mikesm@co.williams.nd.us