

**69<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**House Bill 1112 - "Relating to membership of the NDPERS Public Safety Defined Benefit Retirement Plan."**

Senate State and Local Government

February 6, 2025

Testimony Submitted by:

Ken Wangen, President North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association

Chairwoman Roers, members of the Senate State and Local Government Committee, the North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association supports this bill.

State firefighters are just that firefighters. Firefighters employed by the state, not a district or community. But rest assured they are highly trained and great assets to all fire departments in the state.

State firefighters are not excluded from the dangers of exposures to hazards typical of firefighters employed by a district or community simply because they are employed by the state of North Dakota. With that in mind why would they be excluded from the NDPERS Public Safety Defined Benefit Retirement Plan if they meet all the "other requirements" current fire fighters on the plan meet?

Firefighting especially wildland firefighting has always been a younger person's occupation due to the toll it takes on the body. That issue is double edged as #1 injury or health concerns force retirement #2 replacements without proper incentives it become harder to recruit replacements. Offering eligibility to the NDPERS Public Safety Defined Benefit Retirement Plan goes a long way to addressing those issues.

The fall of 2024 showed the entire state fire services that being prepared will be and should be priority #1. The perfect storm happened early October and the state firefighters were prepared and deployed assisting with containing and eventually extinguishing fires that taxed local response to their limits.

Simply said offering eligibility to the NDPERS Public Safety Defined Benefit Retirement Plan is simply another tool to help recruit and retain personnel to ensure that we have well trained and capable people ready to respond.

Please again take this testimony as support for HB1112 from the North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association.

Ken Wangen  
President North Dakota Fire Chiefs Association  
Fire Chief Carrington Volunteer Fire and Rescue