

To: State and Local Government Senate Committee

From: Chris Augustin, Dickinson, ND

Subject: Oppose Senate Bill 2308

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Roers and members of the State and Local Government Senate Committee. For the record, I am Chris Augustin, a Dickinson resident, and certified North Dakota professional soil classifier. Thank you for this opportunity to share my perspective on Senate Bill 2308. I am not in favor of Senate Bill 2308 in its current form.

Senate Bill 2308 removes the requirement to register with the state board of registration for professional soil classifiers. The new proposed definition of a soil classifier is extremely vague and could pose safety complications from improper engineering, poor water management, and pollution hazards from insufficient soil classifiers collecting bad data.

If registration with the state board is no longer required, who sets the bar and ensures soil classification work is done properly? It is unlikely that 'self-policing' will be adequate to ensure standards are met and accountability will be lacking. The state board of registration for professional soil classifiers is comprised of well-versed soil scientists; who ensure well-trained soil classifiers are making sound recommendations in critical situations.

The standards to be a professional classifier set forth by the board are rigid, and include completing a college soils curriculum, four years of experience, and a rigorous examination. At the time of being certified, I was out of college or almost ten years. I had master's and bachelor's degrees in natural resources management and had taken several soil classes. It took me three attempts to pass the North Dakota professional soil classifier exam. That arduous process made me a much better soil scientist.

I understand and support lessening our tax burden and bureaucracy and feel that this bill does achieve that. However, the state board of registration for professional soil classifiers operates as a non-profit, does not receive tax dollars, and is self-funded. Membership dues cover all costs incurred by the professional soil classifier board. There is no cost to the state of North Dakota to have this critical service in place.

North Dakota is blessed with some of the best soils on Earth. Soils are a limited non-renewable resource since it takes 500 or more years to make an inch of topsoil. Without the professional soil classifiers, I am fearful that our soils will dwindle, livelihoods will be impacted, and people could be hurt. I ask that you do not change the definition of a professional soil classifier. Doing so will help protect North Dakota's two greatest resources which are our people and soil. Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,



Dr. Chris Augustin

Professional Soil Classifier of North Dakota #76