

Testimony-SB 2308
February 5, 2025

Chair Roers and members of the Committee, my name is Mat Retka. I serve as Secretary & Treasurer with the North Dakota Board of Registration for Professional Soil Classifiers (NDBRPSC) but am writing to you as a concerned citizen and professional opposed to SB 2308.

My story is a testament that those willing to work towards soil classifier registration in North Dakota will find themselves doing important work. I was first exposed to soil science as freshman student at NDSU in 2010 and became more and more interested in soil science, ultimately making it the focus of my undergraduate degree. After college, I witnessed the technical expertise and passion for soil science shared by Professional Soil Classifiers and aspired to join their ranks. After gaining the prerequisite years of experience and much studying for the practical exam, I received my Professional Soil Classifier registration in 2015 at the age of 27. I am now employed by a private engineering company, and have hired and helped mentor another other soil classifier who received registration in 2023.

Soil Classifiers provide valuable services throughout the state, including work with landfills, wetlands, soil survey, septic system assessment, and mine land reclamation. Many aspects of soil classification require hands-on experience within a specific region, and the NDBRPSC ensures soil professionals working in North Dakota are qualified to conduct this work.

The NDBRPSC was established in the early 1970's under NDCC 43-36 and the profession remains relevant today. Eliminating the NDBPSC, as SB2308 would effectively serve to do, would allow any person with "special knowledge" to practice soil classification under the new proposed definition in 38-14.1-14 and would discredit the work currently being conducted by pre-qualified individuals. I see no merit in eliminating the current professional accreditation that the NDBRPSC administers, as soils and soil classification remains as important now as it did 50 years ago when the registration board was founded.

North Dakota's vibrant agricultural industry is literally rooted in our soils, and our soils acts as the primary filter for protecting our state's water quality. I ask the committee to consider the ramifications to this Bill, that as written, would weaken a profession that serves to help properly manage and maintain one of our State's most important resources-our Soil.

Mat Retka

