

To: State and Local Government Senate Committee

From: Zach Bartsch, Fargo, ND

Subject: Oppose Senate Bill 2308

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Roers and members of the State and Local Government Senate Committee. My name is Zach Bartsch, of Fargo, a farmer, and the most recent North Dakota Professional Soil Classifier. Thank you for taking the time for the public to provide testimony regarding Senate Bill (SB) 2308. For the record, I oppose SB2308 in its current form.

Strength from the Soil. I first found an appreciation for our state's soil helping my grandpa farm, an experience I share with many of my fellow citizens in North Dakota. In college, I knew I wanted to have an education that focused on our natural resources and was particularly drawn to soil due to agriculture and its complex interactions with the world. My graduate research in Soil Science focused on reclaiming soils following contamination from oil spills in the Bakken. Now, I am a fourth generation farmer and practicing soil classifier after gaining the adequate work experience and technical skills on the job. I owe a great deal of gratitude to my mentor and fellow professional soil classifier, Matt Retka. He and the seventy-six others who have provided priceless work towards understanding and protecting the source of North Dakota's strength- its soil.

In fact, for over fifty years, the North Dakota Professional Soil Classifiers have provided valuable services throughout the state. Importantly, they survey and assure adequate topsoil is identified for the development of landfills and surface coal mines. This helps improve mine reclamation and reduces the complications landowners experience when farming the reclaimed land. Additionally, soil classifiers assist in wetland delineations and siting soil septic systems, helping protect healthy surface and groundwater sources. Many aspects of this work require hands-on experience within the region and support the requirements of the current North Dakota Board of Professional Soil Classifiers rules.

In its proposed language, the definition of a qualified soil scientist is too vague and does not provide a way to vet one's experience with soils. It appears anyone can claim "special knowledge" of soil classification in order to provide services in the state, effectively jeopardizing the quality of the work being conducted by current registered soil classifiers. Self-policing does not work, nor does this proposed bill suggest any method of verifying one's claims of "special knowledge".

I request the committee reconsiders SB2308 as proposed, in order to protect our state's soil knowledge, soil as a resource, citizens' health, and energy and waste management success.

Respectfully submitted,

Zach Bartsch, North Dakota Professional Soil Classifier #78