

Chair Roers and Members of the Committee,

My name is Megan Langley, and I serve as the Executive Director of Strengthen ND, an organization dedicated to empowering rural communities across North Dakota through strategic investment, capacity-building, and storytelling. I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 2332.

SB 2332 represents a crucial step forward in ensuring the safety, stability, and sustainability of rural North Dakota. By establishing the Legacy Earnings Emergency Services and Public Safety Fund, this bill acknowledges a long-standing reality that many of our rural communities face—limited resources for emergency response, a dwindling workforce in emergency services, and increasing pressure on local governments to do more with less.

In too many of our small towns, fire and emergency medical services rely on dedicated but overburdened volunteers. These individuals answer the call at all hours, often traveling significant distances to provide lifesaving care. However, without sustainable funding, we risk losing these essential services entirely. SB 2332 takes a forward-thinking approach by ensuring a dedicated set-aside from the Legacy Fund earnings to support emergency services. This funding will allow communities to recruit and retain first responders, modernize equipment, improve communication infrastructure, and ensure that every North Dakotan—no matter where they live—can rely on timely emergency response.

At Strengthen ND, we work closely with rural communities to develop strategies for economic resilience, and time and again, we hear that one of the biggest challenges is the uncertainty around emergency services funding. A crisis should not be the moment we realize our communities are unprepared. Instead, we must proactively invest in emergency response systems to safeguard our residents and ensure a high quality of life in rural areas.

For these reasons, I urge this committee to support SB 2332. This bill is not just about financial allocations—it is about the safety and future of our rural communities. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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