

Chairman Owens & Members of the Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this committee with testimony regarding House Bill 1460. I come before you as a member of the Grand Forks City Council representing the wonderful citizens of Ward 1, which also encompasses a large portion of the University of North Dakota campus. I would also like to inform you that I do work full time as the Investigations Commander for the University of North Dakota Police Department but am only speaking on behalf of my role as a council member.

As an elected official who happens to be an 11-year law enforcement officer both as a county deputy and a campus law enforcement officer, I see first-hand how the policies and laws that we put in place have an impact on the communities we represent. I often ask myself, is this policy good for the community and in this particular case, will it have an impact on making the community safer?

In my opinion, House Bill 1460 does neither of these two items. In fact, House Bill 1460 makes the University of North Dakota campus and Grand Forks Community significantly less safe. As this bill is written, a fully licensed police officer from UND could be responding to an emergency call of gun shots being fired and when they arrive on scene the suspect could be standing a few feet from a campus building. But as this bill is written, those few feet could put that suspect on private property, thus not allowing a UND Police Officer to act due to them not having any authority.

If you take this same bill and write it so that it is applicable for county sheriff's offices around the state, you would be saying that a county deputy only has jurisdiction on property owned or leased by the county. If you take this same bill and make it applicable for state troopers, you are saying that state troopers only have jurisdiction on state owned or leased property. Finally, if you take this bill and apply it to city police officers you are saying they only have authority on property owned or leased by the city they are employed by. We understand that this is not currently the case for any of the agencies I listed above. Our law enforcement officers throughout the State of North Dakota do a tremendous job keeping our communities safe, we should be looking at different ways to support them, not hinder their ability to investigate crime and bring closure to victims because they happen to be a foot away from property owned or leased by the State Board of Higher Education.

I have always said that when our citizens are in difficult or emergent situations, they will not care what color uniform shows up to assist them or what the patch on the shoulder says. They will be truly grateful that an officer is there in their time of need. If this bill is passed, officers are now tasked with making split second decisions on whether the crime is occurring on leased or owned land of the State Board of Higher Education. I urge the members of this committee to vote NO on House Bill 1460. I would be happy to stand for any questions the committee may have.

Danny Weigel  
Grand Forks City Council  
701-330-0317