



NORTH DAKOTA SENATE

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SB 2252 – Water dispenser monitoring

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House Human Services Committee, Rep. Robin Weisz, Chair

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, for the record, I'm Erin Oban, senator for Bismarck's District 35, here to introduce and briefly discuss SB 2252.

This bill is coming after work with and at the request of a constituent of mine, a small business owner who sells and services water dispensers, mainly in places like grocery stores and truck stops or gas stations. As it stands, there is no oversight, regulation, or quality testing of these dispensers. This bill proposes to add a section to Chapter 23-09, Food and Lodging Establishments and Assisted Living Facilities, giving authority to the ND Department of Health to begin regular monitoring and testing of the water provided from these dispensers. I anticipate that people who are willing to take bottles to these machines and pay out of pocket for its water are doing so for a reason, and they should know they're getting what they're paying for.

Together with my constituent throughout the interim, we met with the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Health, and the Attorney General's office to see what, if anything, we could do to create accountability to keep the industry honest and fairly competitive or recourse in cases where the water being sold maybe isn't the quality of water being advertised. Separately, I also discussed this our local public health director to get a sense of any potential burden this might place on those who would be conducting the testing. Because these are already sites they monitor and regulate, she didn't feel it would be out of line to check one more thing while they're already there.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony, and while I'd be happy to try to answer any questions, but I'd be happier to introduce Adam Miller, that small business owner in my district, to help answer specific questions about the industry, the testing, etc. and to provide greater context into the reason behind the request and the importance to the integrity of his business and the customers he ultimately serves.

Thanks for the opportunity to share this issue with your committee, and I would ask for your favorable recommendation.