

Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota

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Senate Appropriations Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Darren Schimke, President of the Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota representing 415 professional firefighters across our great state. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 1435.

HB 1435 is the type of Bill that sends a direct message to Police Officers, Firefighters and Correction Officers that the State of ND and our employers have our backs if the ultimate price is paid in the line of duty.

Believe it or not, but this topic isn't something we think about often. We train for every type of scenario out there and try to prepare for a positive outcome. But the fact of the matter is, all scenarios don't follow a rule book. Sometimes situations arise that are out of our control and the ultimate price is paid. Thank God this type of tragedy hasn't happened often within our State, but it has.

HB 1435 will give Police Officers, Firefighters and Correction Officers the peace of mind that our families and dependents will be covered if we don't return home at the end of our shift. Words cannot express entirely what that peace of mind would be like? I do know what comes to my mind though: Gratefulness, Relief, Less Anxiety and Peace to name a few. If you could please try to imagine, during one of our families' darkest time, to have HB 1435 in place would take away one of the biggest burdens that they would face as they try to navigate forward after a line of duty death. I pray that this Bill never has to be exercised in the State of ND.

I have recently spoke with a few individuals that hold the same position as I do within their respective states. They dealt with the families of fallen fire fighters first hand and assisted them with navigating through the healing process. One family was afforded this type of coverage and the other two were not. While each of the family dynamics differed, what was evident was that the road to some sort of recovery was made smoother by not having to worry about such a hardship while moving forward after the tragic line of duty death.

Thank you for this opportunity and your hard work. We are requesting your consideration of a Do Pass recommendation of HB 1435 from the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Darren Schimke