

Testimony – HB 1457  
Senate Political Subdivisions Committee  
March 25, 2021  
By Cody Schulz  
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Chairman Burckhard and members of the Senate Political Subdivisions Committee, my name is Cody Schulz. I am the Director of the Homeland Security and Deputy Director of the Department of Emergency Services (DES). I offer this testimony to ask for two adjustments to HB 1457.

I believe the intention of this bill is good. It requires of both our public safety officials and elected officials a consistent analysis of the environment. As government officials we must ensure that we are communicating the best and most current threat environment, and a review of an emergency or disaster declaration at every regular meeting should accomplish this without too much administrative burden.

The first adjustment we respectfully ask you to consider is for emergencies and disasters related to fire. In practice, and most years, Counties declare a fire emergency in late spring or early summer and link burn ban restrictions to the National Fire Danger Rating System Index. This index is updated daily and published on the NDRResponse website. Most of these County emergency declarations prohibit burning on days when the index is in High, Very High, or Extreme.

Secondly, another provision that causes concern is that an emergency order can not last more than thirty-one (31) days between renewals. Given that some Counties and Cities meet only once per month, this provision may still require special meetings to stay in compliance. For example, if an entity meets on the second Tuesday of every month, there would have been four (4) instances since the beginning of the COVID-19 disaster that would have required a special meeting because the time between meetings was thirty-five (35) days.

HB 1457, with these considerations, would strike a balance between frequent assessments and adjustments of emergency and disaster declarations while ensuring a level of consistency in process and communication with the public.

On behalf of the Department of Emergency Services, I respectfully ask that these changes be considered.

Thank you for your time; I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.