



## Sheriff's Department



Robert Roed  
*Sheriff*

March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Chairman Louser and members of the committee,

For the record my name is Jason Kraft, I am a Captain at the Ward County Sheriff's Department in Minot, and I am providing testimony in support of Senate bill 2299. As I did for the Senate, I will use two of our agencies recent investigations in to catalytic converter thefts as justification to pass this bill.

Through the summer of 2021 in to the spring of 2022, our agency investigated a multitude of catalytic converter thefts in the Ward County area. During those investigations, investigators identified two different individuals that were engaged in the business of buying and reselling catalytic converters in a manner that we suspected was contributing to the overall number of thefts in our area.

Investigators discovered that both of these individuals would meet with people in locations like parking lots and would conduct business out of their vehicles. Paying cash for used catalytic converters. They would then take these catalytic converters and resell them for a profit. Both of these individuals fit the legal description of a scrap metal dealer under the current law and were subject to keeping records of their transactions. However, investigation revealed that at least one of the individuals kept no records and was buying stolen catalytic converters. That individual was arrested for dealing in stolen property and failing to keep records by a scrap metal dealer and pursuant to a plea agreement they plead guilty to dealing in stolen property. The second individual referenced has not been charged and the investigation is inactive.

Since those investigations began approximately one year ago, and word got out that we were going after scrap metal dealers that weren't complying with the law, our agency decided to compare the number of reported catalytic converter thefts for one year prior and one year after, to determine whether or not the business model of buying converters in parking lots for cash had any effect on the number of thefts.

What we found is that for the 12 months prior to those investigations, we had 37 catalytic converters reported stolen, but only 11 in the 12 months after. That is an approximate 70% reduction in the number of reported thefts.

This bill seeks to eliminate those parking lot transactions, which were clearly contributing to theft in our area by requiring scrap metal dealers to have to register and have a fixed business premise. Without those requirements, it is difficult for investigators to find stolen catalytic converters when they don't know where to look in the first place.

As for the other provisions in this bill requiring proof of ownership, while a dishonest individual can very easily bypass that proof by signing a false statement, we would support this provision as a step in the right direction.



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Last, we also support the creation of specific penalties regarding the theft of catalytic converters in lieu of the standard theft of property statutes. The creation of this section clearly establishes that the value for the grading of the offense is based upon replacement and repair costs, and not the scrap metal value.

With that, I'd like to thank the sponsors of this bill and will answer any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Kraft".

Jason Kraft, Captain  
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