

Good morning, Chairman Sorvaag and members of the Senate Appropriations Education and Environment Committee. I am Dirk Wilke, Executive Director of the Public Health Division at the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (Department). I am providing this testimony on behalf of the Department to support the implementation of a staffed, 24/7 emergency assessment and monitoring capability within the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services (DES).

Public health and medical services are important components of most large-scale emergency responses. Our efforts are improved by having a solid understanding of the emergency and responding quickly. Implementation of 24/7 monitoring and assessment capability within DES would create a central point of contact where information from multiple sources is gathered, analyzed and leveraged for a coordinated response. Currently, this 24/7 hub does not exist. Incoming information sources could include road, energy, weather, law enforcement, fire, public health, medical facility, and other conditions. By having this capability 24/7, state and local response agencies could have improved outcomes including having a better understanding of the emergencies they are facing and shorter response times.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information.