



January 24th, 2023

North Dakota Firefighters Association
North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office

RE: Support for SB-2211

Chairman and Committee Members

I am Matt Clark, Fire Chief for the City of Williston, Williston Fire Department. I also represent the Williston Volunteer Fire Department. On behalf of our department, I stand before you in support of SB 2211.

In 2014 the Williston Fire Department and Williston Volunteer Fire Department began expansion efforts to meet the growing emergency service needs of the Bakken Oil Field and our neighboring communities. Our department transitioned from 32 staff in 2014 to 120 staff in 2022. Our personnel expansion was mirrored by our facilities and emergency apparatus, transitioning from one fire station to four. These efforts were driven by our emergency and public service calls for service. Our region has been impacted by an annual rise in call volume, with 2022 being our highest year to date, with over 5200 calls for service.

Expanding our department and services would not be possible without our partnerships with the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office and the North Dakota Firefighter's Association. These agencies have directly supported our community and will continue to do so with the support of SB 2211. Our department's Fire Inspection Division now works with the State Fire Marshals office to ensure minimum life safety compliance for all inspectable buildings within our jurisdiction. Our community has adopted the 2021 International Fire Code per the

recommendation of the Fire Marshall and has adopted a local ordinance to assist with compliance.

The growth of our Fire Inspections Division has led to an improved rating through the Insurance Services Office from an ISO 5/8b to an ISO 2 classification. This rating reduces overall insurance premium rates for our communities. The Fire Marshal's office has also helped our department establish our fire investigation program. This program has developed four fire investigators for our department and ensures structured investigation procedures are followed following an incident.

The North Dakota Firefighters Association has served as the regulatory certification body for our staff. Through our partnership with the NDFA, our department has established minimum training requirements for all personnel and has trained local members to serve as certification evaluators for our region. The NDFA provides continuous support through facilities, training props, and lesson plans. The continued support of the NDFA and its transition will help expand the services they offer and will continue to support the training efforts of our department.

The Williston Volunteer Fire Department has been our department's primary recipient of the Insurance Premium Tax. This funding has been used to offset the cost of staffing to ensure our department meets the National Fire Protection Association minimum staffing levels for emergency response. The tax distribution has compensated operational expenses for command vehicles and equipment. Additionally, this funding helped establish a regional training facility for the northwest region of North Dakota. This training facility has been the host to over 60,000 hours of emergency service training and 14 out-of-state certification programs and is routinely used for Department of Emergency Services training.

All our department's efforts would not have been possible without the direct support of the State Fire Marshal's office and the North Dakota Firefighters Association. We believe SB 2211 will continue to build upon these efforts and improve emergency services across the state. I want to thank you for your time and for the chance to speak with you. I would welcome any questions you may have.

Matthew J. Clark
Fire Chief, Williston Fire Department
of our department.