



March 20th, 2025

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
600 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

RE: Support for SB 2340

Chairman Porter & Committee Members,

My name is Corey Johnson. I am the Assistant Chief of Operations for the City of Williston Fire Department. I am here today on behalf of the City of Williston and the Williston Fire Department to express our strong support for SB 2340. This critical legislation proposes a comprehensive legislative management study to evaluate and address our great state's evolving fire service operational and response needs.

Our state is not immune from large-scale incidents that devastate our local communities, regions, and state. In recent years we have seen wildfires, tornadoes, crippling winter weather, and train derailments. Although our emergency services handled these situations well, many weren't without significant loss, including the loss of life, as we experienced during the Ray/Tioga wildfires. These incidents are complex and unpredictable and adequately providing public safety services to communities across the state often requires a systematic and team-oriented approach.

These many incidents have demonstrated that we can and must do better. The study proposed by SB 2340 focuses on improving coordination, creating regionalized response teams, and standardizing training. SB 2340 reflects the collaborative approach necessary to make a statewide impact by including the state's major fire service stakeholders, such as the North Dakota Firefighter's Association, the North Dakota Fire Chief's Association, the North Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office, the North Dakota Forest Service, the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education, and other stakeholders.

In Williston, we are acutely aware of the increasing demands on our fire service as we address the needs of a growing population, evolving risks, and limited resources. The growth of our community, driven largely by the expansion of the oil and gas industries, has significantly increased the demand for emergency services. Additionally, our region is routinely impacted by severe storms and experiences elevated emergency call volumes, further underscoring the

need for a comprehensive evaluation of fire service capabilities. The proposed study's emphasis on evaluating staffing, training, equipment, and structural needs is crucial for effectively enhancing our ability to protect lives and property. Additionally, exploring alternative funding mechanisms detailed in SB 2340 could significantly reduce reliance on local property taxes, creating a more equitable and sustainable financial model for fire services statewide.

The Williston Fire Department and the City of Williston are committed to supporting initiatives that strengthen North Dakota's fire service capabilities and enhance the safety and well-being of our residents. We stand ready to contribute to this critical study and collaborate with state leaders to implement its recommendations.

We respectfully ask for your support to help advance public safety in North Dakota by recommending SB 2340 to the House floor with a "do pass" recommendation. Together, we can build a stronger, more responsive fire service that meets the needs of all North Dakotans.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to public safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Corey A. Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Corey A. Johnson, Assistant Chief of Operations
City of Williston Fire Department
(701) 572-3400 ext. 2317
coreyj@ci.williston.nd.us