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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1258  
SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
MARCH 21, 2025

**ROBERT FRANK - DIRECTOR OF ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION ENGINEERING, MONTANA-DAKOTA UTILITIES Co.**

Good morning, Chairman Patten and members of the Committee.

My name is Rob Frank, and I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 1258 on behalf of Montana-Dakota Utilities Co. Montana-Dakota proudly serves 158 communities in North Dakota with electricity and natural gas.

Montana-Dakota has a long-standing tradition of reliably delivering energy for more than 100 years. While electricity is often taken for granted, assumed to be available whenever needed, the reality is that ensuring reliable power requires constant vigilance. It involves meticulous planning and development of generation resources to meet demand, as well as the construction of transmission lines to deliver power where it is needed. This is precisely where House Bill 1258 comes into play.

A current example that underscores the importance of this bill is the Jamestown to Ellendale transmission line (JETx). This project, developed by Otter Tail Power Company and MDU, aims to enhance electric reliability and resilience in North Dakota, meeting the region's energy needs and supporting economic growth. More information about the JETx project can be found at [jamestowntoellendale.com](http://jamestowntoellendale.com).

Regional transmission organizations, such as the Midwest Independent System Operator (MISO), regularly evaluate the transmission system and identify necessary upgrades. The JETx project was identified by MISO as a priority project within its Long-Range Transmission Plan, essential for maintaining grid reliability.

House Bill 1258 seeks to streamline the process for electric transmission lines by applying the same procedures already in place for other linear infrastructure projects, such as pipelines. This bill empowers the Public Service Commission (PSC) to evaluate transmission lines, considering local concerns while weighing the benefits these lines bring to the electrical grid.

## Public Interest vs. Self-Interest

As evidenced by the submitted testimony, there is significant emotion and passion at the local level regarding the development of projects like JETx. It is understandable that local officials may desire to impose unreasonable setbacks to halt projects especially when pressured by their neighbors. However, for the reliability of the electric grid, it is essential that such decisions are made by those with a broader perspective.

### Addressing Misinformation About Transmission Projects

1. **Safety:** Transmission lines are safe and have a proven track record with no health impacts to those living or working nearby. Farmers have successfully farmed around and under transmission lines without any impact on production. Livestock, such as cows, feed and milk without issues. If there were any adverse effects, they would be well-documented.
2. **Public Hearing Process:** The PSC has a comprehensive hearing process where the public can voice their concerns throughout the transmission line approval process. The law mandates that transmission lines mitigate impacts on the environment, wildlife habitat, and endangered species. The PSC staff is experienced in analyzing these reports and data,
3. **State Authority:** Electric transmission line projects span multiple local jurisdictions. State authority ensures fair application of rules across all areas.
4. **Landowner Rights:** Landowners directly affected by transmission lines retain the right to negotiate and decide what happens on their land. This bill does not infringe upon those rights.
5. **Decision-Making:** A township board or county commission is a small group making decisions for a larger community, similar to elected PSC commissioners. The difference lies in the broader view and expertise of the PSC.
6. **Statewide Impact:** This bill is not limited to the JETx project; it makes sense for all transmission projects to be developed across the state.
7. **Project Scope:** Large transmission projects are not built for a single customer's load, regardless of size.

It is important to note that the process outlined in this bill is not new. It mirrors the procedures already in place for other linear infrastructure projects, such as pipelines. House Bill 1258 aligns procedural requirements for electric transmission facilities with those for gas or liquid transmission facilities, providing consistency and certainty. It offers appropriate state-level oversight while ensuring reliability, resource adequacy, and promoting economic development.

Finally, and as I know this committee has heard before in relation to other legislation that has come before you, the kind of transmission build out represented by JETx is desperately needed to meet the explosive demand for energy across the region and country.

I respectfully urge the committee to recommend a "Do Pass" on HB 1258.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for allowing me to speak with you today. I am happy to answer any questions.