

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill No. 2340

January 27, 2025

Mr. Chairperson and Members of the Senate Committee Name:

My name is Jeremy Presnell, and I serve as the Fire Chief for the City of Dickinson, North Dakota. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Dickinson Fire Department and the City of Dickinson in strong support of Senate Bill No. 2340, which proposes a legislative management study to evaluate the evolving fire service operational and response needs of our state. As a fire service leader deeply involved in both urban and rural emergency response, I believe this bill is essential to ensuring the safety and resilience of North Dakota communities.

The fire service in North Dakota is facing unprecedented challenges due to increasing call volumes, greater demand for specialized training, and the complexity of emergencies, including wildland-urban interface incidents. Senate Bill No. 2340 takes a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach by addressing critical aspects of fire service operations:

1. **Coordination of Resources:** Enhanced coordination among existing state resources will lead to improved organization, mobilization, and training, ensuring that fire departments across the state can respond effectively to emergencies.
2. **Regional Response Teams:** Establishing fire service regional response teams will enable swift and efficient deployment of resources, particularly in areas that may lack the capacity to handle large-scale or complex emergencies on their own.
3. **Standardized Training and Authority:** Standardized training and clearly defined authority for fire service operations will promote consistency and preparedness across all levels of emergency response.
4. **Staffing and Structural Needs:** Evaluating staffing capabilities, cross-training opportunities, and backfill provisions will ensure the fire service has the personnel and resources to meet growing demands. Additionally, this evaluation can help address workforce retention and benefits, both of which are vital for sustaining the fire service.
5. **Fiscal Support:** Transitioning to a restructured model of fiscal support that reduces dependency on local property taxes will provide equitable funding and alleviate financial

strain on local communities. This will ensure the sustainability of fire services across North Dakota.

6. **Unified Fire Service Model:** Reviewing and updating state laws and administrative rules to implement a unified fire service model will streamline operations and enhance collaboration among stakeholders.

This bill also calls for collaboration with key partners, including the State Fire Marshal, North Dakota Firefighter's Association, North Dakota Forest Service, and other critical stakeholders. Their collective expertise will ensure that the study provides actionable recommendations that reflect the unique needs of North Dakota's diverse communities.

Senate Bill No. 2340 is not just about addressing the challenges of today but also preparing for the challenges of tomorrow. By investing in this study, the state legislature will provide a roadmap to strengthen our fire service infrastructure, improve emergency response capabilities, and protect the lives and property of North Dakota residents.

I urge the members of this committee to support Senate Bill No. 2340 and prioritize the safety and well-being of our communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremy Presnell
Fire Chief
City of Dickinson, North Dakota

