

TESTIMONY OF

Karl Rockeman, Director of Water Quality

Good morning, Chairman Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Karl Rockeman, and I am the director of the Division of Water Quality within the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality. The Division of Water Quality protects and monitors our water resources to ensure the quality of surface and groundwater for public use. I am here to testify in support of HB 1358.

Prior to 2019 and the creation of the DEQ and the Environmental Review Advisory Council (ERAC), the Department of Environmental Quality was a section within the Health Department and would routinely work closely with our local public health partners. This bill formalizes the continuation of that long-standing relationship.

The ERAC advises the DEQ regarding our work and its impact on their respective areas and provides information about that work back to their stakeholders. The current make-up of the ERAC includes ten representatives from various industries and three state agencies. The Council meets at least twice a year, and minutes of past meetings are available on our website. The Council is advisory only; all final decisions are made by the DEQ Director.

To provide an example where we work together, Local Public Health is contracted by the DEQ to conduct inspections and investigate complaints regarding public water and wastewater systems, odors, waste disposal and other environmental concerns. This allows for a more timely and efficient response to complaints.

Also, Local Public Health and the DEQ cross train for a response to hazardous material incidents or other environmental emergencies. They can provide important local information to us and communicate important environmental health info to the public.

In conclusion, the department supports the addition of a local public health representative to the Environmental Review Advisory Council. Mr. Chairman and committee members, this concludes my testimony. I ask for your support of HB1358, and I would be happy to answer any questions.