

TESTIMONY OF

Major Tom Iverson, Chief of Operations

Good afternoon Chairman Clemens and members of the committee. My name is Tom Iverson and I serve as the chief of operations for the North Dakota Highway Patrol. I am here to provide testimony in opposition of House Bill 1295.

House Bill 1295 removes the requirement for a front license plate in North Dakota. From a law enforcement standpoint, a front license plate serves a legitimate purpose. For example, someone who witnesses a crime or is the victim of a crime often tries to obtain a license plate number or at least a partial license plate number to relay a vehicle description to law enforcement. Furthermore, law enforcement officers are continually dispatched to reckless driver calls. Given the number of white Chevy Silverado's traveling our roadways, it is nearly impossible to locate the correct vehicle without a description of the license plate.

Many types of incidents benefit from license plate descriptions including:

- Attempt to locate calls such as a missing person or suicidal subject
- Gas drive offs
- Crashes involving a vehicle that flees the scene
- Stolen vehicles
- Violent incidents such as shootings
- Road rage incidents
- Reckless driver calls
- Amber, Silver, and Blue Alerts
- Rolling domestic violence calls
- Trespassing situations
- Assaults
- Burglaries

Law enforcement officers across the state respond to these types of incidents on a daily basis and rely on license plate numbers as one method to quickly identify a suspect vehicle. Officers are frequently checking front license plates on passing vehicles during each shift.

According to the National Sheriffs' Association, motor vehicles are involved in 70% of serious crimes in the U.S., including murder, assault, robbery and drug smuggling. Additionally, without a front license plate, it is very easy for criminals to intentionally park their vehicle to make it very challenging to impossible for law enforcement officers to be able to see the rear plate.

From a highway patrol standpoint, our agency enforces registration violations as well. Everyone who operates a vehicle on a public roadway is expected to register their vehicle, but the fact is that failing to register a vehicle is a common violation. Front license plates help with enforcement.

It's understandable that someone who owns an expensive vehicle wouldn't want to drill holes into their front bumper, but there are options to attach license plates without causing any damage such as adhesive license plate brackets.

States like California are pilot testing license plate wraps which are installed and removed like graphics on our patrol vehicles. California's DOT authorizes a vendor, and interested customers pay a fee of \$120 to purchase their own front plate so there is no cost to the state. This would be similar to purchasing an antique plate in North Dakota which costs \$100 or a collector plate which costs \$160.

A front license plate may not be aesthetically pleasing, but it does serve a purpose, especially helping members of the public and law enforcement identify potential vehicles involved in a crime. It's difficult to see a rear license plate in a rear-view mirror after a vehicle passes, and it's impossible at night. Even the color, make, and model of a vehicle can be difficult to decipher at night, so a front license plate is beneficial.

This concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.