

Good Morning Representatives Guggisberg, Marshall, and Roers Jones,

The City of Fargo is experiencing internet connection issues this morning. I am not sure if I will be able to testify virtually regarding HB 1463.

I am writing to oppose HB 1163. Allowing firefighters to carry a weapon while on duty is not the image of a firefighter that I want to portray in our community. We have well trained law enforcement officers in our community.

HB 1463 requires an individual to successfully complete weapons training. I don't believe the group that provides that training has been consulted to ensure they have the resources to meet this requirement.

As the Fire Chief in Fargo, this bill places a burden on me to provide BCI with a list of people who are authorized or no longer authorized to carry while on duty. I would also be required to certify that all training and certification requirements are met.

Firefighters and EMS personnel have a significant amount of training that is required annual to maintain proficiency to provide a high level of service to their respective communities. Law enforcement officers are provided with training on the use of force and incident de-escalation that are not required of Firefighters and EMT's. The Fargo Fire Department does not have the time nor the resources to ensure that employees who would desire to carry a weapon are trained and maintain proficiency required.

I don't believe there has been consideration to the effects on a fire department or the community should a firefighter make the decision to discharge a weapon while on duty. I believe that allowing to carry a dangerous weapon while on duty will open up communities, fire departments, and fire chiefs to liability should a weapon be discharged while on duty. You see it already in law enforcement each time they discharge their *service* weapon.

I am also concerned with the security of the weapons while employees are engaged in firefighting activities. Carrying a weapon has the almost certain effect of delaying firefighters in engaging in their duties. Most of our apparatus are not able to be locked, and if they are able to be locked firefighters will need to secure the weapon before engaging in those activities. If this is allowed I know the first thing that will be asked for is to provide a secure box on each fire apparatus to store the weapons.

The last item that of concern is what happens when a weapon is stolen or misplaced while on duty? Is the fire department liable should that weapon be used in a crime?

I am an ardent supporter of the 2nd Amendment and a gun owner myself. I just don't believe there is a need for this legislation and that carrying weapons for public safety should be left to those who are trained to do so, Law Enforcement.

I ask that you please vote no on this bill.