



NORTH DAKOTA SENATE

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Testimony on SB 2242

Jordan Kannianen, District 4 Senator

Chairman Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee,

This bill seeks to discourage the theft of catalytic converters. The value of the precious metals in these converters makes them a ripe target for theft, with perpetrators sawing them off vehicles in the dark of night or stealing vehicles for the sole purpose of swiping and selling the converter. Various reports and verbal anecdotes have led me to believe that this is a large enough problem to require action.

The goal of this bill is to curb the theft of these converters without infringing upon our business community's normal operations or adding burdensome regulations upon them.

The bill in its current form requires some form of proof of ownership in order to sell a catalytic converter to a scrap dealer, with an exemption made for licensed businesses that in the regular course of business collect, store, or sell a catalytic converter or any other motor vehicle part. Some business groups have expressed concern about whether automotive shops or towing businesses are included in this exemption. Legislative Council believes they would be, but an amendment could clarify this.

A further concern was the use of the term "chop shop" in the bill, which is defined in code as one engaging in illegal activities. This should be taken out.

In communications with the scrap dealers and their national institute, they support the overall goal of the bill but have good recommendations on how to make the bill better. They have suggested to place the language within the existing statute regarding scrap metal dealer requirements, since they are already required to document various things with every purchase.

The penalty levels are also adjusted to align with the existing penalty in 51-35-04 for scrap dealers who violate any provision in the section.

With all that being said, I have submitted a hog house amendment which should resolve the previous concerns and earn the approval of the interested parties.

Lastly, a further suggestion was made to make it illegal to buy and sell converters in a mobile unit, since the biggest buyers of stolen goods are the roving, fly-by-night buyers. Including this language in law would give law enforcement the tool they need to shut these individuals down. I would leave that to the wisdom of the committee, but that is not in the proposed amendment.

I believe the bill as amended would accomplish the goal of curbing the theft of catalytic converters without interfering with current business practices and operations. I am also open to suggestions on how the bill could perhaps be improved, and I ask for a Do Pass as amended. Thank you.