

Committee Chair Meek, Vice Chair Boquist, and committee members, I am providing written testimony in support of SB 1068.

Under current laws and statutes, a property owner can choose not to be in a Rural Fire Protection District (RFPD). Property owners do not have a choice on educational taxes, city or county taxes, or public safety law enforcement taxes, yet they can choose if they support essential public safety fire and emergency services. This puts the financial security of our RFPDs in jeopardy because they do not receive funding from all supported property owners. Our RFPDs do not have the option of not showing up to an incident because a property owner may or may not have paid since there is no way to verify this when an emergency is in progress. Property owners who can “pay as they go” are a drain on the rest of the property owners who pay taxes every year to fund our first responders.

I urge you to support SB 1068 and pass it out of committee and support it on the chamber floor. We should all support our emergency responders who are on the front line of fire, medical, and disaster response. Please ensure that everyone using the services of these responders pay for the infrastructure to make sure they are available for all of us when they are needed.