Testimony
SB 2016—Department of Water Resources
Senate Appropriations Committee—Education and Environment Division
Senator Sorvaag, Chairman
January 27, 2023

Chairman Sorvaag and members of the Senate Appropriations Education and Environment Committee Division, my name is John Paczkowski, and I am the State Engineer for the Department of Water Resources (DWR). I am here today to testify in support of SB 2016; specifically, the state watch center concept which is part of the Adjutant General's request. A 24/7 center that modernizes our approach to information sharing and flood coordination will benefit countless citizens across the state.

DWR stands to benefit from a 24/7 state emergency watch center in two ways.

1. It will allow us to more proactively coordinate state responses to flooding and other water-related scenarios by centralizing all hazard-related data into one location. As you may know, DWR has a growing number of real-time data acquisition sensors called PRESENS (Pushing REmote SENSors) located throughout the state that gather information such as precipitation, soil moisture, soil temperature, and water-level data. This watch center would incorporate that data into a robust common operating picture, allowing for more proactive approach to flood events.

2. Up-to-date situational awareness for flood events in the state makes both DWR and DES better responders, and the watch center facilitates that coordination. This past Spring, the Bourbanis Dam incident is an excellent example of our state's current response to a potential dam breach and flooding event. The Bourbanis Dam response was a success thanks to the utilization of a variety of resources such as National Guard helicopters, DWR's real-time PRESENS data sensors, and National Weather Service data to name a few. The watch center DES is proposing would provide an opportunity to coordinate efforts—such as those deployed last spring—more efficiently.

This concludes my testimony, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.