

McKenzie County Public School District No. 1

House Appropriations Committee Members

April 1st, 2025

Re: SUPPORT for SB 2225 and request providing an amendment for a lookback on qualifying infrastructure

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 2225 and the ‘look back amendment’ (referred to in House Political Subs as the Bekkedahl amendment), allowing the North Dakota Department of Commerce to consider a look back on existing infrastructure for the HOME program and to allow them to provide grant funds that spur rooftop creation on credited single family residential infrastructure.

As the Superintendent of Schools for the McKenzie County Public School District #1, we have over 350 employees and recruitment in an era of teacher and employee shortages, amidst continued student enrollment growth, is critical and relies heavily on housing availability and infrastructure. The school district conducts a comprehensive demographic/enrollment study each year through RSP & Associates to assist with enrollment planning as it relates to school district infrastructure and capacity. The study has highlighted, in the last several years, the issue related to affordable, single-family housing and the shortage of available options in our County. It is clear the lack of affordable, single-family options in McKenzie County will reduce or restrict future student enrollment growth correlated to our regional workforce and the capacity to attract and retain a quality workforce in our community.

The ability to attract a high-quality workforce, as a political subdivision supported by local property tax, is challenging when the average price per single-family home is substantially higher in our area compared to other areas of the state and/or region. The ability to attract and retain professional staff is limited if the prospect of an affordable single-family home is low due to the shortage of supply and the high demand in our area. Business development and recruitment also is limited by rooftop development in our area, which is also a factor in employee recruitment and retention for the younger generation workforce prospect.

Local efforts have taken place to assist with the costs of construction involving single-family housing with only limited results. It is essential for the state, in supporting a workforce for its largest industry, to provide opportunities to address the cost discrepancies involving single family housing construction. The returns on this investment will be substantial in terms of sustainable communities and workforce to allow for continued and expanded economic prosperity in our state. Future generations of North Dakota residents need the housing infrastructure in place to provide continued prosperity and stability, especially in western North Dakota.

Passing the lookback amendment to 2225 would be a significant step toward addressing these challenges. By supporting initiatives that expand access to affordable housing, we can create an environment that attracts and retains permanent education professionals. Education is often considered one of the most critical factors for families moving into a community, it is important to ensure housing infrastructure is in place to support our educational efforts and to help recruit the next level of workforce to our communities and region.

I urge you to recommend a DO PASS for 2225, support the lookback amendment and provide the full appropriation to help create single family rooftops in western North Dakota, making it possible for our families and workforce to live and thrive in the communities they serve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Steven Holen

Dr. Steven Holen
Superintendent of Schools – McKenzie County Public School District #1