

Diane Martinson,
9558 72nd St NE
Edmore, ND 58330

March 6, 2025

Honorable Members of the House Political Subdivision Committee

Subject: Urging a “Do Pass” Vote on SB2158

Chairman Longmuir and Members of the Committee-

I write to you today with a strong and urgent request to vote “Do Pass” on SB2158, which is scheduled for review on Friday, March 7, at 11:00 a.m. This crucial piece of legislation seeks to clarify language from the 67th legislative session, ensuring that funds designated as "assets" may rightfully be transferred to our city for the development of a much-needed community center within our former school.

The intent of SB2158 is clear: to allow the allocation of *cash* assets to the city to establish a thriving community hub. This center would serve as a vital resource for our rural residents, offering a fitness facility, a well-maintained gymnasium, a refurbished library, and the potential for a café, small business spaces, and community gatherings. These amenities are not just conveniences—they are essential to maintaining the social and economic fabric of our town. The nearest comparable facilities are nearly 30 miles away, creating a barrier to access and limiting opportunities for families and individuals of all ages to remain active and engaged.

The decision to close our school was one of the most difficult choices our community has ever faced. It was made only after extensive discussions with our community and stakeholders, careful deliberation by the school board, and overwhelming recognition that our students would benefit from a larger peer network and expanded academic opportunities elsewhere. Despite the heartbreak of closure, our community rallied together with a shared vision—to repurpose the school into a community center that would continue to serve as the heart of our town.

I strongly support transferring these funds to the city, as maintaining the school building falls far beyond the city’s current financial capacity. The \$500,000 in question is intended solely for insurance, heating, electricity, and maintenance, ensuring the facility remains operational for years to come. Importantly, these funds are designated strictly for sustaining the school building and will not be diverted to unrelated municipal projects. This dollar amount is not the totality of remaining funds in the nonoperating schools’ possession, but rather a portion.

As fourth-generation farmers, landowners, and taxpayers, my family and I are deeply invested in the future of our rural community. My husband and children are proud alumni of EPS, I was honored to serve as an employee of the school, and we wholeheartedly support SB2158 as a means to preserve our town’s identity, encourage young families to stay, and sustain our agricultural way of life.

I urge you to stand with us and vote “Do Pass” on SB2158. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Diane Martinson
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