



North Dakota House of Representatives

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COMMITTEES:

Appropriations

HB 1143

Good morning, Chair Wanzek and members of the Senate Government Operations Appropriations section.

Today, I am proud to introduce an infrastructure bill that may not look like the typical proposals we consider—roads, bridges, and buildings. But I firmly believe that this bill is just as essential to the fabric of our state.

This bill represents an infrastructure investment that will serve as the backbone to every county in our state. It's a piece of the larger puzzle that, when properly placed, connects the fundamental needs of our citizens to one of the most basic human requirements: food.

What is truly remarkable about this initiative is the work that has already been done by the Great Plains Food Bank (GPFB). Since its founding 41 years ago, GPFB has grown exponentially with its reach and impact, largely without state involvement. Today, semi-trucks carrying food and supplies have logged over 190,000 miles, crisscrossing our state and reaching all 53 counties. They have partnered with nearly 200 food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and tribal nations in North Dakota, ensuring that people from both rural and urban areas have access to the resources they need.

The mobile pantry program has become a lifeline, ensuring that food isn't just available in large urban centers but also in rural and underserved areas. This bill seeks to build on that success by expanding the infrastructure that allows food to be distributed more efficiently and to even more people across our state.

This isn't just about logistics; it's about creating a stronger, more connected state—where access to food is guaranteed for everyone, no matter where they live. It's about building systems that are responsive and resilient, so we can continue to feed our citizens in an effective and timely manner.

As an appropriator for our state who closely watches our bottom line and as a farmer's wife, I have been deeply impressed with the work of the Great Plains Food Bank over the last 41 years. Their current facility, which has been in use for the past 24 years, has been stretched to its limits. They've done what we often do with our equipment and buildings—we make them last. I call it "farmer engineering"—holding things together and making them work well beyond their expected lifespan.

Now is the time for us to make a critical infrastructure investment. By investing in the infrastructure of our only food bank in North Dakota, we ensure that the Great Plains Food Bank can continue the vital work that our citizens rely on every single day.

Behind me, there are individuals who will provide more details about the current building situation, the needs of their clients, and answer any other questions you may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration. This is the investment we need for those who need it the most. I do have an amendment to offer the committee. I would like to increase the amount of the grant back to \$10,000,000. As you will see and hear from the executive director, this is a 2:1 match with the capital campaign well on its way. This amount from the state ensures that we are committed to our citizens.

I look forward to working together to support this essential infrastructure project for the good of all North Dakotans.

Brandy L. Pyle