



Burke County Fair Association
PO Box 202
Bowbells, ND 58721

March 20, 2025

Chairman Wanzek and committee members, I am writing to you respectively about the North Dakota House Bill 1591. While a county fair infrastructure bill is something that all small county fairs dream of, the sad reality is that some of us that need it most will not be able to obtain it as written.

Burke County is a very small county in North Dakota consisting of only around 2,200 residents. Our beloved county is federally designated as a historically underutilized business area. We struggle to bring new businesses and residents/families to our county. Burke County has limited recreational activities and events for our residents and their families to participate in. The Burke County Fair, which originated in 1916 is one of the few that we have to offer.

Like most other fairs, we have seen a decline in numbers over the 20 past years in our 4H programs for our kids and overall attendance. Since our new board was put in place in the last couple of years, we have seen that being reversed. Our attendance numbers are increasing dramatically and we are finally bringing new blood to Burke County. We are offering entertainment and new activities that our county has never seen.

Our emphasis has been promoting our great county and what we have to offer. Whether it is our wonderful small communities and schools, our fantastic emergency responders and departments, our agriculture and energy expansions, and our local businesses, we want to show North Dakota what Burke County has to offer.

Like many other fairs and organizations our biggest issue is funding. In 2024, we received less than a 1/3 of what we needed to put on our small county fair even without a carnival. Due to our generous sponsors and donors, we raised enough money to make this happen. The only issue is, there is not enough meat left on the bone for grounds and infrastructure improvements. Every building on our grounds is in dire need of improvement. Whether its leaking roofs, structurally failing buildings, or an aged unsafe electrical system, WE NEED HELP.

While I do strongly support the original HB1591, the amendment that was added does not help us. Essentially upon adding the amendment which includes the 1 to 1 match, the grant funding has become unattainable for us. I consider our fair to be on the same list with the many others that need this infrastructure grant the most, but sadly, I do think it is out of our community's reach. I ask you to add an amendment for a lower match based on a counties population.

Respectfully,

Nathan Schneider
President
Burke County Fair Association