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Grand Forks County & GrandSKY EUL Testimony

To: Chairman Wanzek and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee
From: Timothy Curry, Grand Forks County/Grand Sky Consultant, retired USAF
Colonel and former GFAFB Wing Commander

January 14, 2025

RE: Senate Bill 2018: A BILL FOR AN ACT TO PROVIDE AN
APPROPRIATION FOR DEFRAIVING THE EXPENSES OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Dear Chairman, Wanzek and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

My name is Timothy Curry, and I am a national security consultant for Grand Forks County. I am a retired U.S. Air Force Colonel who served for 25 years. I am also a former Wing Commander of Grand Forks Air Force Base where I led an installation of over 5,000 Airmen, civilians, and dependents from June 2021 to June 2023.

I am writing as a military and national defense subject matter expert to express my full support for the Enhanced Use Lease (EUL) Development Grant (GrandSKY) funding identified in the Department of Commerce budget request.

In June 2019, I moved to Grand Forks County and undertook military duties flying and leading Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) missions, also referred to as Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) while stationed at Grand Forks Air Force Base. At the time I was the base director of staff when I met the authors and administrators of the Enhanced Use Lease between the County and the United States Air Force (USAF).

I quickly learned and experienced first-hand the difference GrandSky had on the UAS industry, the state of North Dakota, and most importantly the service members that preserve our way of life. GrandSKY is well known by Commanders and defense leaders stationed in Texas, Virginia, and Washington D.C. where the Numbered Air Force Command, Major Air Force Command, and Department of the Air Force are located.

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At a recent installation expo in San Antonio Texas, Grand Forks County administrator Tom Ford expertly chaired an EUL panel with key Air Force leaders. He and others shared best practices of the EUL with industry and military personnel from all over the United States. The EUL between Grand Forks County and GrandSKY was highlighted as an example for others to emulate as other installations and organizations seek new lease agreements nationally.

As a result of your funding and support to GrandSKY, organizations like the Space Development Agency (SDA) and Test Resource Management Center (TRMC) have now joined the North Dakota team leading defense efforts in testing and fielding vital Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities and weapons systems capabilities that will keep America safe for generations to come. I helped facilitate the partnership between these organizations and Grand Forks Air Force Base while I was in Command. SDA and TRMCs budget numbers for 2025 will be approved soon; you can be confident both organizations will remain well funded and resourced based on current global threats.

The Department of the Air Force (DAF) budget proposal directs \$188.1 billion to the Air Force and \$29.4 billion to the Space Force. Department leaders and congress understand the threat and the capabilities required to deter adversaries and win conflicts in the future. Current Secretary of Air Force Kendall relayed during his testimony to congress for the 2025 budget that the department needs immediate and significant capability modernization to keep pace with the growing military capabilities of the Peoples Republic of China.

Thankfully, North Dakota continues to show Washington leaders how to pragmatically support our service members by funding two key areas mentioned by the Secretary of the Air Force as well as the Air Force and Space Force service chiefs: 1) Space Force and Air Force modernization, and 2) accelerated fielding of Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA), which GrandSky and Grand Forks AFB is working toward daily.

Since I joined the Grand Forks County team in October 2024, I have been able to discuss GrandSky and the test range capabilities with over a dozen clients that are all interested in finding ways to partner with the state and particularly GrandSky. Each will bring with them a positive economic impact, but more importantly, each will bring increased defense capabilities required to achieve our national defense and national security objectives. Continued investment into GrandSKY is expected to provide thousands of jobs in North Dakota. Key technologies and expertise will continue to grow at GrandSky and throughout the state that will help with national

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defense modernization particularly, CCA testing, evaluation and fielding, Radar and Airspace modernization and development, Hypersonic missile test and evaluation, RPA test and training, as well as upgrading and reconfiguration of the largest RQ-4 inventory in the Department of Defense that will conduct most operations out of GrandSky.

While I was in command at Grand Forks Air Force Base, Department of the Air Force leadership made it clear that bases of the future would need to advance public and private partnerships to thrive, effectively counter peer threats, and in some instances survive in a fiscally constrained environment. Your funding and support remain critical to national defense.

I fully support GrandSKY's requests that the Appropriations Committee consider funding GrandSKY at the originally requested amount of \$22.5 million. The return on investment cannot be captured monetarily, yet it is clear that North Dakota continues to lead in advancing our nations ISR and Space capabilities through GrandSKY.

I affirm the testimony of my colleagues that North Dakota is the nation's leader in UAS capabilities. I also agree that it is critical to the state's economy that the Legislature continues to invest in GrandSKY to deter our greatest adversaries like the PRC and ensure our service members are adequately trained and equipped to win should deterrence fail.

Thank you for your time and faithful support to our service members.

Sincerely,



Timothy Curry
USAF, Colonel (ret)
CEO Curry & Co Solutions, LLC