



Dream Center Bismarck
1805 Park Ave.
Bismarck, ND 58504

March 12, 2025

Chairman Luick & Senate Agriculture & Veterans Affairs Committee:

My name is Jim Barnhardt. I am the Founder and Executive Director of Dream Center Bismarck. I am a full-time volunteer at the Dream Center and also own a main street Bismarck, small business. My story with Dream Center Bismarck started with a vision God gave me on May 29, 2016. The vision was for a meal ministry surrounded by free services to help those in need. In March of 2019, we were sanctioned as a Dream Center. By June of 2019, in collaboration with Bismarck Public Schools and Great Plains Food Bank, we started our Adopt-a-Block mobile grocery distribution in the parking lots of South Central High School and Jeannette Myhre School. When COVID came along in March/April of 2020, we once again collaborated with Great Plains Food Bank and the Bismarck and Mandan Public Schools and expanded our mobile grocery distribution to six days a week. In April of 2022, Dream Center Bismarck opened our new 24,300 square foot facility at 1805 Park Avenue in Bismarck. Site selection was helped with input from Bismarck Public Schools and once again, Great Plains Food Bank was there.

Due to the need in our community, the Dream Center has grown rapidly and was responsible for 1.1 million meals in our community this last year, and the need is growing. In addition to all those meals, we work with entities like Northland Health, Bismarck/Burleigh Public Health, CHI, NDSU Extension, Job Service ND, Bridging the Dental Gap, Sanford Health, Celebrate Recovery, Narcotics Anonymous, Missouri Valley Coalition for Homeless People and many others to bring in free services that help our low-income or homeless clients get to a better place in life. As we say "it's all about the food." Food breaks down barriers to opportunities. Whether you're a kid in school or an adult trying to work – it's hard to function if you are hungry.

Last year, through Great Plains Food Bank, we received over one million pounds of grocery product. Roughly half of that came from the Great Plains Food Bank warehouse in Fargo. Most of the other 50% of product we receive comes from food rescue initiative, a program coordinated by Great Plains Food Bank in which we pick up food product from stores like Costco, Cash Wise, Family Fare and others. Over a million pounds of food. And that's just the Dream Center. Great Plains Food Bank serves over 180 food pantries.

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Since opening less than three years ago, the Dream Center has seen the need grow, not just for ourselves, but for other entities serving those needing assistance. As the only food bank in the state, Great Plains Food Bank has a big job. If it wouldn't be for Great Plains Food Bank, it would have been nearly impossible for Dream Center Bismarck to distribute those one million meals last year. Our partnership is simply that important.

Dream Center Bismarck is just one of over 180 entities served by Great Plains Food Bank. Passage of House Bill #1143 is critical to the future of our state. Many families with children, seniors and the vulnerable would simply not be able to make it without those 180 entities served by Great Plains Food Bank. Food is a basic need. Whether it's a family with children, our seniors, or anyone else, they should not have to worry about where their next meal will come from. North Dakota is a prosperous and growing state. Let's not let the low-income and marginalized struggle with food insecurity. The need is growing, and our efforts need to too. Please, consider passing House Bill #1143 so Great Plains Food Bank can expand and continue to serve the over 180 entities across the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jim Barnhardt'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jim Barnhardt
Founder & Executive Director
Dream Center Bismarck
701-955-2150