



House Bill 1524 Testimony: In Favor
Hon. Jeff Barta, Chairman
Senate Industry and Business Committee
Chairman Barta and Committee Members,

March 17, 2025

My name is Anna Nelson, Executive Director of Williston Economic Development. One of my extremely important partners in my work is the Tri-County Regional Development Council serving Region 1 in northwest North Dakota. To ensure that the team can continue to do their work at the fullest capacity, I would respectfully urge a DO PASS recommendation for HB1524.

For every grant question, workforce development issue, childcare discussion, and housing proposal, the Council was at the table offering expertise and assistance. This is true both now in my public capacity as well as during my time in the non-profit sector at the Williston Area Chamber of Commerce. I imagine this does not even compare to the level of support the Council offers to rural communities in the region that do not have the same level of resources to dedicate to grant writing and economic development efforts as do urban municipalities.

Given the rural nature of most North Dakota communities, these councils, collectively, serve a crucial role for 40% of our population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That said, they touch the lives of all North Dakotans in some way, shape, or form through the work that they do to catalyze and support economic and community development. In the current economic landscape, that involves work on critical elements such as housing, workforce development, infrastructure, and so much more.

As with any business or organization, adequate funding is key to impact, sustainability, and growth. Since their inception, regional councils have done a tremendous job of securing funding not just for their regions, but for their own operations. The financial support that HB1524 could provide would give them the capacity to more fully focus on their regions' needs. Given the impact they have had to date, I can only imagine what they will be able to do with additional resources to support their missions and their communities.

One request I would humbly make is that the committee consider an increase in the appropriation, if the budget would allow, to help them further their reach and great work to facilitate and support economic development in each of their respective regions.

Regardless, I believe this is an important show of support for the councils and, for the reasons mentioned above, I respectfully urge the committee to give this bill a DO PASS recommendation.

Thank you so much for your consideration, and please feel free to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Nelson".

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