

March 16, 2021

Re: SB 2018

Greetings Chairman Monson, and members of the House Education & Environment Division Appropriations Committee:

My wife and I, on five separate projects, have used the services of Mary Beth Votava at the Minot Branch of the Small Business Development Center. Her advice and ability to think of things we didn't think of have been invaluable to us in our businesses.

First: I purchased an existing small business, the funeral home in Mohall, in 2004. Mary Beth generated all the reports and projections that I needed to take to the bank in order to get financing.

Second: My wife had the opportunity to buy a flower shop where she worked for 21 years. As we began the buy/sell process, it quickly became apparent the owner wanted way too much. The worst thing you want to do is overpay for a business. Sometimes, in the blind excitement of purchasing a business, a grounded, neutral party needs to look at it and provide advice. My wife did not buy this business.

Third: Mary Beth generated the projections for my wife to go out on her own and open her own flower shop. My wife opened her shop in April of 2012. She has now been open close to nine years and has been named the #1 flower shop in Minot for the last seven years.

Fourth: We leased the building for five years that houses my wife's flower shop. We were given the opportunity to purchase the building. Mary Beth assisted my wife and me in the paperwork needed to take to the banks for the purchase of the building.

Fifth: Mary Beth assisted my wife with applying for the Commerce Emergency Relief Grant. These funds were used to purchase a UV disinfection lamp, masks and sanitizing stations to make her business safer for customers to come in.

The Small Business Development Center has been vital to both my wife and me and our businesses. Small businesses are the backbone of our communities, contributing to the local economy and providing jobs.

I would encourage your committee to approve, and maybe even increase, the funding for the Small Business Development Center so other people, just like us, who have a dream to own a business, can get the help they need in the planning stages. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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