



Testimony of Jennifer Greuel
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
In Support of HB 1159
Jan. 26, 2021

Chair Delzer and members of the House Appropriations committee:

The Economic Development Association of North Dakota represents more than 80 large and small and rural and urban economic development organizations on the front line of growing businesses and communities in North Dakota. The primary purpose of the organization is to promote the creation of new wealth throughout North Dakota to develop more vibrant communities and improve quality of life. It is for these reasons our organization and its members want to express support for HB 1159.

EDND has been involved in conversations with utility companies, legislators, and the Public Service Commission (PSC) for many years about the topic of natural gas, most recently during the 2017 Legislative Session and Interim. The availability of natural gas and the expansion of natural gas infrastructure play a key role in the continued growth and vitality of many businesses, communities and the state. Natural gas is a resource typically required in order to attract any significant manufacturing opportunity. National site selectors have reported they won't consider a community for a manufacturing project if it does not have natural gas service. Therefore, communities with access to natural gas have an advantage over communities without it. According to Montana-Dakota Utilities, over 300 communities in the state currently do not have access to natural gas. This includes communities like Hazen, Beulah, Crosby, Bottineau, Belcourt, and New Town, as well as smaller towns.

The challenge of providing natural gas to unserved or underserved communities lies in financing the gap between the existing pipelines and the community. There is a lot that needs to be done in order to fill this gap, and we support these grants as a potential tool in the toolbox for communities. The economics for bringing natural gas services to communities will vary, and we know it may take more than one tool to meet the needs of these communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support for HB 1159 and for your continued commitment to keeping North Dakota globally competitive and diversifying the state's economy.