

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2273
March 9, 2023
House Agriculture Committee
Bill Wocken on behalf of the North Dakota League of Cities

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the House Agriculture Committee. For the record, my name is Bill Wocken, appearing on behalf of the North Dakota League of Cities in support of Senate Bill 2273.

The largest share of cities in North Dakota are potential beneficiaries of this legislation. Those small cities are the backbone of the state. This bill follows up on some extensive discussion and testing of ways to improve grocery offerings in the more rural areas of the state. Any effort to provide food options for these areas is well placed.

The pilot program envisioned by this bill looks at industry economic viability and sustainability. While the spirit of competition is alive and well in North Dakota, the industry finds the need to re-define competition. Instead of vying for business with the town next door, grocery stores in rural North Dakota need to compete against the larger market. Price and convenience are obviously two of the metrics that need to be included. This pilot will help to flesh out an economic and sustainable model.

This is important to the need to access convenient and affordable food in all areas of the state, but it is also an important step toward job retention. Each year we expend great effort to attempt to bring new jobs to North Dakota. Retention of jobs in rural North Dakota is an equally important effort.

For these reasons, Mr. Chairman and committee members that the North Dakota League of Cities supports Senate Bill 2273 and respectfully requests a Do Pass recommendation to the House of Representatives. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have of me.