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Dear members of the Senate Appropriations - Government Operations Division,

Thank you for taking my testimony into consideration today. My name is Megan Langley. I am representing myself - not an organization - and I am testifying in support of HB 1018 with restored funding for the North Dakota Department of Commerce's funding pools for communities and the people power needed to administer them.

I have been a rural development practitioner for over 10 years, working all across the state to help communities be better. During that time, I have seen the growth and continued positive evolution of the North Dakota Department of Commerce through its Main Street Program.

Through the Main Street Program, we have seen time and time again the benefit of nonprofit/public/private partnerships to support and accelerate community development. To really make an impact in rural North Dakota, Commerce has taken an "all of government" approach, which has been a game changer in connecting communities to the resources they need, cultivating broader community visions, and creating more sustainable solutions.

As a part of supporting HB 1018, it is important to ensure that Commerce has the resources they have to continue that forward momentum. Please consider the following restorations:

- **\$800,000 for the community grant line item.** This funding will be used for vibrancy, planning and additional grants to implement community planning. Over the last biennium, Commerce wasn't able to provide funding to all the great projects and planning taking place in communities. With the reduction of this fund, Commerce would need to do more cuts to the grant line item, thus hurting the state to create communities that attract and retain workforce.
- **\$15M for slum and blight removal for commercial and housing.** This pilot program has a great opportunity to help communities remove the blighted areas both in their commercial areas as well as support the removal of housing stock to replace it with workforce housing.
- **Additional one full time employee budgeted for the Main Street Program.** There is an incredible connection between state and federal government programs,

along with a need for support to rural communities who do not have professional staff. This additional person will help in developing and implementing planning along with grant support.

Your support of HB 1018 with the above-mentioned funding restorations will ensure that North Dakota's communities have access to an entire toolbox to attract and retain workforce while maintaining a high quality of life.

Sincerely,

Megan Langley