
Golden Valley Veterinary Clinic

Testimony of Britt Jacobson in support of HB 1018 – with an amendment

To Senate Appropriations Committee – Government Operations Division

March 8, 2023

Chairman Wanzek and members of the Committee:

I am Britt Jacobson, Practice Manager for Golden Valley Veterinary Clinic, Park River, ND.

I'm seeking your consideration of an amendment to support \$8 million (\$1 million per biennia per region) funding for the eight regional councils which serve communities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and more statewide.

Created by NDCC 54-40.1 in 1973, the regional councils were to serve the purpose of establishing statewide policy for planning, economic development programs, operation, coordination and related cooperative activities of state/local governments to resolve issues and problems transcending individual jurisdictions. Yet, these organizations have not had a consistent long-term funding mechanism to meet this purpose.

Today, our region can have a rural renaissance with the need for more than 1,500 new employees in our small towns – but only if we address the critical needs of **housing, workforce, and childcare**. In 2021/2022, we enlisted Roger Brooks, a renowned national expert on **destination development** to secret shop our region and develop an action plan that would support visitor, resident, and investment attraction to northeastern North Dakota. The plan is ready to go – it calls for six professional staff to lead – which is currently not available due to the lack of funding.

As an employer who has made a significant commitment our rural community by building a new veterinary clinic, I see the need for this type of continued economic development in our community and our region. I have staff members waiting six months to find appropriate housing. I have additional staff that are unable to work even part-time due to the lack of childcare in our region. In order to grow our business, we need to address these critical needs in order to retain

current employees and attract future employees. Funding for the eight regional councils would help our communities be even more vibrant, healthy, and sustainable.

I urge your support for increasing the rural development capacity across the state by supporting this amendment for \$8 million for the eight regional councils.