

**Testimony of Dana Hager**  
**Economic Development Association of North Dakota**  
**In Support of HB 1018**  
**March 10, 2023**

Chairman Wanzek and members of the Senate Appropriations - Government Operations Division:

I'm Dana Hager, executive director of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND). EDND represents more than 80 state economic development organizations on the front line of economic development efforts throughout North Dakota. The organization's primary purpose is to support the creation of new wealth and the diversification of North Dakota's economy.

EDND has a long-standing and complementary relationship with the Department of Commerce. It is a premier partner providing valuable tools, programs and resources for economic developers in our state. This strong partnership helps us recruit and retain new and expanding businesses locally, bring vibrancy to our communities, train North Dakota's workforce, and compete in national and international markets.

While EDND supports the continuation of all Department of Commerce programs, and we've supplied previous testimony, we want to take this opportunity to express our support for an amendment for regional councils specifically. Created by NDCC 54-40.1 in 1973, regional councils support consistent statewide policy for planning, economic development programs, operation, coordination and related cooperative activities of state/local governments.

**We are asking for the consideration of an amendment to HB 1018 for \$8 million to support the eight regional councils across the state.**

Support for this amendment will help secure the regional councils and the future of rural communities across North Dakota. Each region is unique in the various federal, state and local programs implemented. This amendment will increase the capacity to access additional resources, strategies and funding for our rural communities.

Your support of HB 1018, along with an amendment for regional councils, will ensure that North Dakota's communities have access to an entire toolbox to support North Dakota communities.