

City of McVile

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Testimony of Chanda Arneson 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 Chanda Arneson, City Auditor of the City of McVile.

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.

Increased staffing opportunities would offer the ability to focus more directly on marketing and social media, grant funding and offering assistance with small businesses writing business plans. Our rural communities are a great place to live but extremely underrated. Funding these positions would be giving a fresh perspective of our lifestyles to the quality community members and business owners we long to attract.

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.