



RE: SUPPORT \$8 MILLION FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY
AMENDMENT TO ND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE APPROPRIATIONS BILL 1018

Dear Legislators:

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of Souris Basin Planning Council (SBPC) for state appropriations to support Regional Councils statewide. The Regional Councils have been partners in local and regional economic and community development for the past fifty years and are led by local elected officials and key partners.

While the Regional Councils were created by the state in 1973, the flaw was the lack of a long-term consistent funding mechanism to meet the purpose and objectives outlined in the North Dakota Century Code: *to establish consistent statewide policy for planning, economic development programs, operations, coordination, and related cooperative activities of state/local governments to resolve issues and problems transcending individual jurisdictions.*

Today, 70% of the state's population growth is concentrated in only three counties: Cass, Burleigh, and Williams. Thirty (30) counties in North Dakota continue to lose population which is resulting in increased costs for basic governmental functions whereby increasing local property taxes and state funding requests. Existing Regional Council budgets support only a fraction of the necessary staff to address regional needs to elevate the entire state when compared to our urban centers' professional teams. These budgets come from numerous sources (including every county in the state), rely heavily on short-term grants, and do not provide long-term funding to address long-term needs.

SBPC supports communities, leaders, and entrepreneurs to advance economic progress for ND Region 2. Though we have grown and changed since our founding, our passion for helping communities and entrepreneurs stays the same. We are a solutions-based team working to create opportunities in the communities we serve. Today, our services include providing financing to small businesses and entrepreneurs; supporting nonprofit organizations and communities build capacity through our AmeriCorps program; and providing planning and technical assistance for regional economic and community development initiatives.

Please support providing a long-term funding mechanism for Regional Councils.

Sincerely,



Tony Pandolfo, Chairman

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