

Grand Forks Region Base Retention and Investment Committee

BRIC

Gracie Lian
BRIC Coordinator
151 S 4th Street, Ste. N608
Grand Forks, North Dakota 58206-5726

January 23rd, 2023

Chair Bekkedahl and Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee,

The Grand Forks Base Retention and Investment Committee (BRIC) writes in support of SB 2240 to re-establish the Base Retention Grant Program.

The BRIC was established shortly after the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round to support and enhance Grand Forks Air Force Base (GFAFB), its infrastructure, and its current and future missions. The BRIC is comprised of community leaders invested in supporting the people and missions of GFAFB. The Grand Forks community takes great pride in supporting America's military and our service men and women while also recognizing the benefits GFAFB brings to our local region and the state, with an annual impact of \$270 million.

Since its inception, the BRIC has worked tirelessly to support GFAFB and its Enhanced Use Lease (EUL) agreement with Grand Forks County to allow the development of Grand Sky, the nation's first commercial Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) business park, on leased GFAFB land. Grand Sky's groundbreaking occurred in 2015 and has garnered \$65 million in capital investment since. In 2021 the Air Force announced that GFAFB would be the Air Force's center of excellence for Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance (ISR) with future ISR missions to be housed at GFAFB. These missions have yet to be announced, however, and priorities and initiatives change quickly in the military. Grand Forks finds it imperative to increase national awareness that GFAFB, Grand Sky, UND, and Grand Forks community partners are international leaders in military technology and UAS development.

In the past year, GFAFB and Grand Sky have both acquired new tenants, the Space Development Agency (SDA) and the Department of Defense's Testing Resource Management Center (TRMC), respectively. These two entities exhibit a federal investment into our local community and state that must be embraced and communicated to ever-changing Air Force leadership to ensure Grand Forks remains a priority for mission and basing decisions.

While GFAFB is mission ready, the BRIC knows that there is much work to do. We face rising challenges such as ever-changing military policies, budgets, and priorities. To continue building GFAFB as the base of the future, Grand Forks must continue **Advocacy and Awareness** through annual strategic meetings with Air Force leadership at the Pentagon, Air Combat Command, and 16th Air Force. This includes briefing Air Force leadership on GFAFB infrastructure, ISR and cyber capabilities, and the UAS eco-system at Grand Forks, Grand Sky, UND, and ND. Grand Forks also must address and bolster our standing in existing military **Quality of Life** priorities, as these criteria are integral to the Air Force when making mission and basing decisions. Lastly, Grand Forks must utilize **Strategic Advising** to inform advocacy efforts, to help create national and international awareness of our community, and to help the community prioritize quality-of-life efforts. SB 2240 would be incredibly impactful in helping our community address these goals and initiatives.

Grand Forks Region Base Retention and Investment Committee

BRIC

The Grand Forks BRIC is happy to stand beside the Fargo and Minot communities in our support of SB 2240 as the success of each of our military installations is integral to our state and its citizens. In FY 2021, the military economic impact for ND was \$1.16 billion. This number encapsulates economic development, direct and indirect jobs, and procurement. State investment into North Dakota's military is imperative to protect vital installation missions and economic diversification in ND.

Thank you for your service, time, and consideration as the Grand Forks Base Retention and Investment Committee humbly asks for your support of SB 2240.

Respectfully,

Gracie Lian
Base Retention and Investment Committee – Coordinator

For:
Todd Feland, City of Grand Forks
Dana Sande, City of Grand Forks
Keith Lund, Grand Forks Region EDC
Dr. Robert Kraus, University of North Dakota
Dr. Mark Askelson, University of North Dakota
Barry Wilfahrt, The Chamber GF/EGF
Bruce Gjovig, USAF Civic Leader Program member
Dave Engen, Grand Forks County
Bob Rost, Grand Forks County
Tom Ford, Grand Forks County