

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee.

My name is Austen Schauer, representing District 13, West Fargo.

It is with great privilege that I ask for your support of the **ND Fisher House** (in the form of **HB 1157**) to be located near the VA Medical Center in Fargo.

The **Fisher House** was founded more than 30 years ago by Zachary and Elizabeth Fisher who were in the construction business.

They were at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. and noticed families of veterans sleeping overnight on couches, chairs and in their vehicles while their loved ones were being treated for serious medical injuries.

This was **unacceptable** for the Fishers. This would be unacceptable to North Dakota.

Since that time, 88 **Fisher Houses** have been built in the United States and U.S. military bases around the world but **not** here in our state.

The VA Medical Center in Fargo has the **largest footprint** in the country serving North Dakota, 18 counties in Minnesota and one county in South Dakota.

Some veterans and their families travel more than **300 miles** to the Fargo VA.

The VA provides **medical help**. The **Fisher House** provides **housing help**.

To be sure, it is older veterans in need of critical care at the VA.

However, the VA is also seeing more younger veterans; those who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They too need help, and their families also need a home away from home during a difficult time.

Mr. Chairman, and committee members, I ask for your support of **HB 1157** which would provide a one-time funding gift of \$500 thousand dollars to the **Fisher House**.

I am open for questions.