

Testimony- SB 2273

January 26, 2023 – Senate Agriculture and Veterans Committee

Chairman Luick and Members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee

Regarding **SB 2273**

My name is John Dyste, and I am the President of the North Dakota Grocers Association (NDGA). I ask that you give a “do pass” recommendation on **SB 2273**. NDGA represents the independent retail grocery stores in the state as well as over 80 wholesalers, distributors, and vendors.

Prior to my becoming the President of the North Dakota Grocers Association, I was an owner operator of four small town grocery stores in Southeast North Dakota. I understand full well the challenges that smaller communities face in trying to keep their grocery stores open.

When I became President of NDGA I made sure that we would be a supporter of all stores and communities in our state. With the help of the ND Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives and their Rural Grocers Initiative I was able to view firsthand the start of putting the RAD Co-op into operation. I was very skeptical of this co-op concept at first; but under the guidance of Lori Capouch, Rural Development Director for the NDREC, and the drive of Diana and Randy Hahn and the rest of the co-op members, they have proved that it can work.

Small town stores can succeed if they are given the chance to purchase grocery items, fresh produce, meat, and dairy products, at a fair price and in quantities that they can handle. This model will not work for everyone, but those who are willing to collaborate with other stores now have a blueprint on how to be successful.

SB 2273 will appropriate a significant sum of \$2,000,000 to establish a pilot program. If properly implemented this program could be an answer to access to healthy food in rural areas of our State.

Please give SB 2273 a do pass recommendation.

Thank you and I will answer any questions you may have.