

Testimony in Support of HB 1296
Senate Judiciary Committee & Chairperson Larson
Submitted by Scott Strom, Grand Forks

Madam Chairperson Larson & Committee Members, thank you for your consideration of a Do Pass on HB 1296. My career in the bar business in Grand Forks has spanned 15 years, and I am currently a proprietor of two liquor establishments in my community.

I am surprised the League of Cities is coming out against HB 1296, a bill that essentially clarifies the role of cities in gaming site licensing. The purpose of gaming is to support charities, not to fund projects designated by local government. City governments should not determine what charity I **must** work with in order to offer gaming, who I **have** to enter into a contract with to provide gaming, or the length of my contract with particular charities.

- As a private business owner, I want to rent space to and collaborate with gaming organizations that I believe are in the best interest of my private business. Over my years in this industry, I have worked with and witnessed gaming groups that provide inadequate services, sub-par customer service to patrons within bar establishments and below expectations as a partner with shared interests.
- If a bar owner is offered superior gaming services, higher rent for gaming space, different or additional game types offered, experienced gaming staff to operate within my establishment, or extra hours of operation from a reputable charity doesn't the bar owner have that right?
- Bars are private businesses and proprietors have the right to select services that complement their business models and provide opportunities to increase revenue. Bar owners are not in private business to specifically raise money for directives by local government. Decisions regarding my bar are determined with my financial interests in mind.
- As a private business owner, I have the right to select who I will be partnering with on endeavors within my establishments. Cities directing who I **have** to work with as a condition of offering charitable gaming is clearly government interference into the private sector.