

Testimony of Carrington Mayor Tom Erdmann to the Senate Workforce Development Committee Senate Bill 2151 January 26, 2023

Senator Wobbema and members of the Committee on Workforce Development.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 2151. I'm presently the Mayor of Carrington, our family has resided here for the past 46 years. Carrington is a rural community in the center of our great state with a population of 2080. Carrington is primarily an agricultural community with several amenities supporting agriculture. We are the home of Dakota Growers Pasta Company which sells pasta products all over the United States.

I have spent 30 plus years working with our local economic development and City government to attract and retain businesses, to ensure our residents employment opportunities and provide a solid quality of life for workers and their families. Like most rural communities we are struggling to maintain a workforce for our businesses and farmers. There are job openings in almost every field, and we continue to recruit workers from other Cities and surrounding states, which has not been productive nor filled all the job openings and career opportunities here.

I'm on the board of CATCH: "Communities Acting together for Change and Hope", a newly formed organization to demonstrate that rural places can again become destinations for people seeking a good place to live, work and raise their families. CATCH is primarily seeking to recruit refugee and immigrant families to our rural communities to, yes, help fill the job openings but to help in a humanitarian way to give these families an opportunity to start over.

Watching the national news and shows like 60 minutes there are thousands of families seeking asylum from war thrown areas. As these families are interviewed they want to come to America to start over and they are willing to work and not be a burden to our social services programs. Some of our Federal government red tape doesn't allow for a speedy process, which then does burden our social services programs.

Carrington continues to be on the forefront of working with immigrants. Presently our Golden Acres Manor Nursing Home is working with a firm to acquire immigrant RNs and CNAs. Owner Mitch Page has plans of bringing in 26 nurses over the coming 2 years. Thus far he has acquired 3 nurses with one of the nurse's spouses hired for a maintenance position. Our Carrington Health Center is also working with a firm to seek immigrant nurses. Our community has helped find housing and continues to provide supplies and furnishings for these individuals.

In 2008 we encouraged the Van Bedaf family, a Dutch family with a small dairy, who had moved from the Netherlands to Alberta Canada and due to the cost for milk quota in Canada were seeking to relocate to the US so they could expand their dairy operation from 150 cows to over 1,500 cows. A young family in their 40's with three school-aged children. Not all the residents were in favor of having a 1500 cow dairy near Carrington. The project went forward and today the VanBedaf Dairy is a show case dairy in North Dakota.

Two of their children married school classmates and they presently have three children. Piet is a partner with his parents at the Dairy. Maartje and Casey have started a spin off business with their family dairy known as Cows & Co Creamery making Duchess Gelato and Cheese.

SB 2151 will allow refugees and immigrant the opportunity to start over in rural North Dakota, allowing them the opportunity to get a good job and raise they families in a safe welcoming environment. This proposed legislation is a win-win situation for the refugee/immigrants and our businesses/farmers looking for workers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I will be glad to answer any questions.

Mayor Tom Erdmann