

Senator Wobbema and members of the Committee on Workforce Development

I write to you in favor of SB 2151. I am the Director of Human Resources for Coffee Cup Travel Plazas. We are a family-owned business with a location in Steele ND. Our business has been part of that community for 40 years. We understand that the strength of our business lies in the people and community of Steele. We support opportunities to bring growth to rural communities like Steele.

My professional career has been in Human Resources, specifically team development. For 7 years I worked with Target Corporation in Minnesota. I had the pleasure to work with a diverse workforce that included a large community of immigrant families. My hope is that my testimony can provide insight into the positive impact welcoming new families to a community and workforce has.

With incentives in place to attract these new families to Minnesota, their arrival relieved significant workforce shortages. These families were energized by the opportunity to start a new life, in a safe place, with a home and a job. Often entire families would interview and be hired at the same store. They brought a feeling of pride in their new country, willingness to work hard and strong family connections to these locations.

There was a culture of learning, of sharing language, traditions, and food. Team members embraced these new coworkers who were fast learners and hard workers. A mutual respect was built on their shared experiences at work. The strength of those relationships spilled over into their communities as these new families established roots with stable employment and children in school.

North Dakota is experiencing a workforce shortage. Each year it becomes more difficult to recruit new team members to our location in Steele. As an organization we have taken the step of providing company housing for our team members in the hopes that it will make relocation to Steele possible for interested candidates. Even with housing in place, we continue to struggle to attract new families to North Dakota. In our business, this can mean reduced service hours which impacts our ability to fully serve our communities and guests.

There is no doubt North Dakota communities and businesses would benefit from more families choosing to make places like Steele a safe, welcoming place to start their new life. We have jobs for them and rural communities are ready to welcome them.

Please give the bill a Do Pass recommendation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.