

Testimony for HB 1143

Date Hearing: January 16, 2024

Hello Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee,

My name is Scharlie Kilzer, and I am the Director of the AMEN Food Pantry in Dickinson.

The AMEN Food Pantry mission is to implement a unified community approach to providing food and emergency services to families in Dickinson and the surrounding areas. The AMEN Food Pantry has been successfully serving neighbors for 40 years.

Several years ago, I went through a very needed but difficult transition from a full-time successful manager at a local Dickinson business, living in a 5-bedroom house, to an unemployed single mother looking for a home and food for my children in the matter of days. I went to the AMEN Food Pantry trying to hide my face and my identity because I was so ashamed to be there. A volunteer at the pantry came to me and told me not to be ashamed. She comforted me with a hug as I cried and assured me that there was no shame in being in need. The help we received not only got us through that difficult time but uplifted us spiritually as well. Years later, I saw that AMEN was in need of a director. I instantly knew that I had the passion to help our neighbors, and their families go through their own situations. Today, I am honored to be going into my 5th year as their director.

AMEN's partnership with the Great Plains Food Bank is vital to the AMEN Food Pantry and our mission. Without their support, we would not be able to continue our quarterly Mobile Food Pop-Up, provide children with a full week of healthy meals throughout the summer, and offer our Backpack Program to children during the school months. All of this is in addition to the neighbors we serve monthly at the pantry through open distribution days.

Over the years, I have watched the number of families impacted by food insecurity more than double in our community. HB 114 approval is vital to the AMEN Food pantry to continue and expand many of our successful programs and meet the ever-increasing needs of our surrounding area while supporting and purchasing from our rural and local retailers. It's more than just a statewide distribution center or a facility, it's an opportunity to meet those needs that I see in Dickinson and the surrounding area.

I ask you today to be a crucial part in our mission by acting as a Hunger Hero for your state and approving HB 1143.

Respectfully,

Scharlie Kilzer