



13 E Divide Ave
PO Box 1143
Bowman, ND 58623
701-523-5880
teran@bowmannd.com
bowmannd.com

Testimony of Teran Doerr
Bowman County Development Corporation
Opposition to SB 2035
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I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 2035, as it creates unnecessary uncertainty for organizations like ours, which have a long history of responsibly using charitable gaming funds to benefit rural communities.

My name is Teran Doerr, and I am the Executive Director of the Bowman County Development Corporation. For over 25 years, our organization has utilized charitable gaming funds to improve quality of life in our community, funding initiatives that provide childcare, workforce training, historic preservation, emergency services, and community development projects that impact our rural residents.

SB 2035 raises a critical question: If charitable gaming dollars are meant to support communities, why would we exclude organizations that directly facilitate quality of life and community health, especially in small towns where economic development organizations are often the only resource available?

After reviewing the list of licensed gaming organizations, every organization in the category of community and economic development serves a population of under 2,000. I believe it would be safe to assume that the majority of these organizations are not using the funds for large-scale development projects; they are investing in vital community programs that ensure small towns remain viable.

Our work falls squarely within the intent of the law. According to North Dakota Century Code (53-06.1-01.21), economic development and tourism organizations are already classified as public-spirited organizations, meaning they qualify under current law. The same statute also recognizes that net proceeds from gaming funds can legally be used for:

- Economic development programs that improve quality of life.
- Tourism development within a city, county, or state.
- Community service projects supporting education, housing, transportation, recreation, safety, and health.

Removing these organizations from eligibility disrupts funding for rural communities that depend on these programs.

Our office operates with strict financial responsibility and a commitment to maximizing community impact. We keep expenses to just 41% of total gaming revenue, ensuring that the majority of funds

directly support charitable causes. This level of transparency and financial stewardship is what allows us to distribute resources equitably and ensure long-term sustainability for our community initiatives.

In Bowman County, we use these funds to support childcare, emergency response, veterans' services, and community revitalization, initiatives that make a real, measurable impact in the lives of residents.

Additionally, our Play It Forward Fund has been a transformative initiative. Designed to maximize the impact of charitable gaming funds, this grant program directly empowers local charities, non-profits, and community organizations to address pressing community needs. Overseen by a subcommittee of engaged community members, the Play It Forward Fund ensures that charitable gaming dollars reach every corner of our community, supporting projects that would otherwise go unfunded.

Some of the projects funded through Play It Forward include:

- New playground equipment for local parks, ensuring safe and engaging spaces for children.
- Expansions to a veterans' memorial wall, honoring those who have served.
- HVAC system upgrades for the Rhame American Legion meeting hall, allowing veterans and community members to gather in a comfortable space.
- Flags and crosses for the Bowman American Legion, marking veterans' graves and preserving their legacy.
- The Girls Circle Group Program, which fosters self-esteem, connection, and leadership skills among young girls.
- Meals on Wheels through the Council on Aging, ensuring that homebound seniors receive hot meals and regular wellness checks.

Through Play It Forward, we amplify the impact of every charitable gaming dollar, distributing resources efficiently and equitably across our community. This program is proof that gaming funds, when managed effectively, can create lasting, community-wide benefits that extend far beyond traditional economic development.

If the legislation is to go through, we would urge the committee to explicitly include CVBs and community development organizations as eligible recipients, especially those recognized by a governing body, which is already a legal mechanism under century code. This simple clarification prevents misuse while ensuring that rural communities are not arbitrarily cut off from vital funding.

I urge you to oppose SB 2035 or amend the language and ensure that charitable gaming funds continue to strengthen the very communities they were designed to serve. Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions or provide further details as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Teran Doerr, Executive Director
Bowman County Development Corporation